The Post-9/11 GI Bill® Benefit:

It’s earned by each Servicemember
It’s used by each Veteran
It produces Career Professionals!
The Post-9/11 GI Bill® is an education benefit program for individuals that served on active duty after September 10, 2001. This education benefit became effective on August 1, 2009.

Requirements and features are:

• A minimum of 90 days of aggregate active duty service after September 10, 2001, or a service-connected disability discharge after 30 continuous days of service.
• Honorable discharge from the Armed Forces or continued active duty.
• Basic benefits include tuition and fees, monthly housing allowance, books and supplies stipend.
• Generally, receive 36 months of full-time education benefits.
• For Veterans who left active duty after January 1, 2013 there is no time limit to use benefits.
• Veterans who left active duty before January 1, 2013 have 15 years from discharge to use benefits.
• Eligible to transfer education benefit to dependent if individual meets eligibility criteria.

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Annual Benefits Report FY 2018

The nation’s postsecondary career colleges and universities are proud to serve our nation’s Servicemembers and Veterans. Our schools take this task seriously because we honor and value their public service. We seek to assist them in providing the best possible bridge from military service to the professional career of their choice.
Understanding the Post-9/11 GI Benefit Program

The total number of beneficiaries participating in the Post-9/11 GI Benefits peaked in 2014, 2015 and 2016 with approximately 790,000 participants each year. In the past two years we have seen a decrease.

A reduction in America’s military activities around the world combined with a growing domestic economy have both contributed to this decrease.
Understanding the numbers:
Opponents suggest the for-profit schools are pursuing veterans. The numbers tell a different story:

- In 2012/13, **31% of all Post-9/11 GI Bill® veterans** enrolled in for-profit schools.
- Current GI Bill® Comparison Tool Data shows that **only 20% of GI Bill® students** attend for-profit schools.

With the decrease in number of for-profit schools, combined with both public and private schools increasing their distance education/online offerings, we continue to see an increase in GI Benefits going to public or private non-profit schools.
Using the GI Benefit to Pursue Career Education

Why do Veterans choose career schools?

As Veterans choose to build upon and pursue a career that began in their military service, the nation’s postsecondary career colleges and universities are a natural partner. Our schools offer focused academic programs – usually one course at a time for longer periods than traditional college.

In 2017, 26% of all VA education beneficiaries attended school less than full time. 44% pursued either a 2-year college or a vocational program of study reflecting their desire to build new career skills.

In 2018, again 26% of all VA education beneficiaries attended school less than full time. 43% pursued either a 2-year college or a vocational program of study.

But what makes us different?

Our programs are accelerated in ways that enable the Veteran to complete their studies in the quickest possible time moving from the battlefield to their new career.

Our schools have the highest level of engagement in all of higher education! We set expectations for success. They include:

• Our students can attend school year-round (no summers off!).
• We are open 50 weeks a year.
• We take courses in module terms. These modules are often up to 5 hours of concentration in one subject rather than 5 different subjects
• We take attendance – something most colleges don’t do.
• Finally, our faculty and our classmates become emotionally invested in the successes of our students.
The Aviation Industry is a Good Example:

According to the Aviation Technician Education Council, proprietary institutions currently enroll one of every four aviation maintenance students. There is currently an estimated 1,000 Veterans enrolled in aviation maintenance programs, representing 22% of enrollment!

The proposed inclusion of the GI Benefit in 90/10 puts at risk literally 22% of the incoming workforce for aviation maintenance – mostly large commercial airlines such as Delta, and United Airlines.

Gallup Research recently conducted a national survey of Student Satisfaction at CECU member schools. 76% of veterans told them their degree/certificate was directly related to their work! 71% said they were satisfied with their education; and 63% said they would recommend their institution to a fellow Veteran, friend or family member. Veterans experienced a 39% increase in their annual income compared to their income prior to attending at CECU member schools.
The GI Benefit

“We cannot support and will actively fight legislation that affirms the notion that Veterans’ Benefits are subsidies from the federal government. They are earned through sacrifice and should not be used as a political bargaining chip.”

- Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States

Today, some political leaders are suggesting the GI Benefits should be considered similar to an economic subsidy. These same individuals suggest such benefits should be counted in combination with federal programs to assist low-income students such as Pell Grants and Federal Loans. In doing so, they hope to penalize schools serving low-income students AND veterans. Such schools should be commended for doing what our nation’s elite colleges refuse to do – serve large numbers of both low-income students, and veterans!

Let’s recognize that most veterans seek to continue the occupational skills began during their military service. They want career education, not a broad liberal arts program. They choose our schools because of the programs we offer. As it is said, “The only person who can tell a veteran what to do, is another veteran!” And we know that veterans keep encouraging their military friends to follow their education path.

At a time when our nation confronts the income inequality gap, this would be bad public policy. It would hurt those students who most need access to a college, obtaining a career education that leads to a real job, real wages, and a real place in America’s middle class.
But the truth is that today only seven of the top twenty-five postsecondary institutions enrolling Servicemembers and Veterans though the GI Benefit are for-profit schools. A Military Times analysis of FY17 data from the Veterans Affairs Department ranked the top schools in GI Bill® recipients. The top 25 are:

1. University of Phoenix: 28,373 *
   University of Phoenix Online: 15,946
2. University of Maryland System: 19,077
   Univ. of Maryland University College: 12,828
3. California Community College System: 18,503
4. American Public Education: 15,520 *
5. Education Management: 9,642 (Now Closed)*
6. DeVry University: 8,698 *
7. Washington State Community/Tech Colleges: 8,698
8. Virginia Community College System: 8,289
9. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University: 7,983
10. North Carolina Community College System: 7,925
11. Strayer Education: 7,801 *
13. State University System of Florida: 7,564
14. Liberty University: 7,312
15. University of Texas System: 6,975
16. Career Education Corporation: 6,898 *
17. Bridgepoint Education: 6,829 *
18. Arizona Board of Regents:
   Arizona State University – Tempe: 4,349
19. California State University: 6,466
20. State University/Community College System of Tennessee: 6,419
22. Southern New Hampshire University: 5,996
23. State University of New York System: 5,992
24. Kaplan Higher Education: 4,900 *
25. Alamo Colleges: 4,765

(The asterisk signifies a For-Profit School)
Let’s consider a common set of outcome metrics for all schools using Federal funds

There is a growing, and appropriate, movement toward a common set of outcome metrics for all programs at all schools participating in programs under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. And the best way to protect Servicemembers and Veterans is to ensure that any program at any school funded through the use of GI Benefit dollars meets a minimum level of performance standards. In doing so, we protect both the beneficiary and taxpayers.

In a recent Executive Order, the President called upon the Department of Education to publish the following metrics for each such program (certificate, degree, graduate and/or professional programs) by January 2020:

- Median earnings of graduates in that program
- Median loan debt

We encourage policymakers as part of the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to expand the outcome metrics to also include:

- Retention rate
- Graduation rate
- Time to completion
- Total cost/graduate

This has the potential for political consensus! We should require that all college programs, at all schools, report a common set of outcome metrics for those programs attended by Veterans using the GI Benefit.

Five years of such data will give us the clear evidence we need of good and bad programs. Using such outcomes data we can then determine the appropriate guard rails for a school’s ability to use GI Benefits to fund the continuation of such program. This proposal will protect all Veterans; and all taxpayers!
In the end, the GI Benefit provides Veterans with the skills to become career professionals!

By 2026, the Department of Labor projects America will need 36.5 million new career professionals. They go on to project that 65% of all jobs and 85% of all new jobs will require some level of post high school education.

As you read earlier, the for-profit sector provides education and training for mid-level occupational skills. The real urgency of this conversation begins with a Servicemember and Veteran’s right to use their earned GI Benefit at the school and the program of their choice.

But a secondary urgency relates to the emerging gap of unskilled professionals in many careers. If Veterans cannot pursue their career choice, that career loses a skilled professional. The 2017 data by the Departments of Labor and Education provide some insight into this potential negative impact on America’s economy:

**Projected job openings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Completions</th>
<th>Unfilled jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electrician (26% from sector)</td>
<td>15,470</td>
<td>154,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169,690 openings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Assistant (12% from sector)</td>
<td>43,392</td>
<td>139,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191,760 openings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems Networking (26% from sector)</td>
<td>13,753</td>
<td>70,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84,580 openings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Medical Assistant
69,618 completions
(75% from our sector)
84,520 openings
**Unfilled jobs:**
14,902

Automotive Mechanic
37,418 completions
(29% from our sector)
76,170 openings
**Unfilled jobs:**
38,752

LPN’s
43,952 completions
(24% from our sector)
58,010 openings
**Unfilled jobs:**
14,508

HVAC Maintenance
18,418 completions
(31% from our sector)
47,750 openings
**Unfilled jobs:**
29,332

Diesel Mechanic Technicians
10,216 completions
(31% from our sector)
28,590 openings
**Unfilled jobs:**
18,374

Aircraft Maintenance
5,325 completions
(44% from our sector)
14,960 openings
**Unfilled jobs:**
9,635
And now, meet the Veterans who

• Earned their GI Benefit as a Soldier
• Used their GI Benefit as a Veteran, and
• Achieved their career skills to become one of our Nation’s Professionals!

These are the stories of Veterans who chose our nation’s Postsecondary Career Schools, completed their academic courses and often their externships, and are now moving forward to become a part of building America’s future and their family’s future! Support them. Honor them. Reject those who seek to hurt Veterans by making their GI Benefit an economic subsidy; and then limiting the school’s ability to serve Veterans and low-income students.

Eliminate the 90/10 Rule! It only hurts those who most need help.

Reject those proposals to include GI Benefits in the 90/10 calculation.
Cierria Glover

Fortis College
Mobile, Alabama

The Veteran Affairs was a blessing for me while I attended Fortis College. I was so worried that I would not have time to work and go to school, but the VA made sure I was covered. I quit my job to focus on my schooling and the VA made sure I had an income coming in to help take care of my bills. The VA also reached out and was very helpful when it came to enrolling in school as well as making it easy to reach someone when I had questions. Fortis College also helped make the process easy. I was able to graduate with a 4.0 GPA and as the Ambassador Secretary, which is an organization of honors. The pharmacy where I did my externship hired me as soon as I finished with the hours I needed to graduate. I am now working at an independent pharmacy as a Pharmacy Technician!

Between these two organizations, I am very thankful I chose Fortis College and that the VA was able to help me along with my journey. The VA’s main focus is the veteran and I appreciate all they have done and are doing.
My name is Roderick Brown, US Army-retired Staff Sgt. I would like to take this time to talk about my experience thus far with Fortis College. My journey at Fortis began October 2017. The administrative staff was very helpful in walking me through the process of getting enrolled and getting the process started for me to come to school. I chose the HVAC-R program and from there my journey began. In the six months that I’ve been here I have gained a wealth of knowledge in refrigeration and air-conditioning.

I am highly impressed with the professionalism and dedication that the instructors and staff here as Fortis put out. They truly take the time to ensure that every student is set up for success. For example, we get to do a one-on-one mock job interview where you go over how to build a resume and the way you should dress, which teaches us the do’s and don’ts of how you should conduct yourself when interviewing for a job. But what impresses me the most of all is that the dedication extends beyond the classroom even after students have graduated the program. We can continue to use resources that Fortis offers for as long as we need to.

Life after the military can be hard for a lot of veterans as we have tried to figure out how and where we can fit in in the civilian sector. If a veteran is looking to pick up a trade or wanting to start a second career I would highly recommend Fortis College.
I, Christina Lane, am a USAF Veteran and Certified CMA. I served our Country in support of OIF/OEF. The transition to the civilian world was my fear, but Fortis College was there to help.

On December 1, 2012, I moved to Dothan, Alabama. As I got to know Dothan, I realized the only positions available were in the medical field. I knew I did not want a 2 year degree, and after seeing a commercial for Fortis College, I stopped into the school for information about the MA program, not realizing I would be enrolling into college that day. The receptionist was pleasant, enrollment and financial aid were extremely helpful, and the process was quick and very impressive. I started class in March 2013.

During my time at Fortis, I gained knowledge, skills, and hands on experience. The instructors were professional and dedicated, always pushing you in the right direction for you to succeed, but they also had compassion. During my instruction I needed to take a module off due to my PTSD, and also a death in my family. The instructors and administrators made sure I kept on track with my studies, yet showed their compassion and helped me through a difficult time. That left a wonderful impression with me. It was so wonderful that I wanted to go back to Fortis to be an instructor. Here I am today, a USAF Veteran, Fortis Graduate (2014), and Fortis MA instructor, giving the students what my instructors gave me, a great education and compassion. To me, Fortis is not just a school, it’s family.
John Shambo

Fortis College
Foley, Alabama

Fortis College is a school that works well with Veterans. From the enrollment process to the graduation, the staff are very helpful. They help with ensuring we have all the supplies needed to be successful and they have a VA Certifying Official on-site that I can meet with at any time.

I have completed one program of study and now I am enrolled in another program at Fortis College. The instructors are good about working with students to ensure all subject matter is understood by all students. They have talked about starting another program in the future that I am also interested in attending at Fortis College in Foley. I want to continue to be able to choose the school I attend and continue to use my benefits that I have earned.

Rickey Reed

Fortis College
Foley, Alabama

I had no idea that Fortis College was a veteran friendly school until I made the call to meet the school representatives. From the moment when I took the entrance aptitude exam, until the first day of class, I was extremely impressed with their respect for military veterans. Fortis College has given me the opportunity to use my prior training in learning a new life skill to advance my employability in the HVAC-R field. I hope every Fortis College hires veterans as instructors. Just having the HVAC-R Director being a military veteran gave me a sense of relief that I would be able to compete with my peers in the program. I am happy to have the freedom of choice when it comes to choosing which school I attend. I am proud to be a veteran and a student of Fortis College.
Brittany Menchaca

Fortis Institute
Birmingham, Alabama

Hi, I am Brittany Menchaca and I am an Untied States Air Force Veteran, wife and mother. I just graduated as a Dental Hygienist from Fortis Institute of Birmingham. I am very proud of the opportunity to further my education and become a provider to my family and community through self discipline and dedication obtained during service. While in school I continued to maintain my military baring and strived to do my very best. I am also very grateful for an awesome group of instructors that led to my success in school. I hope one day I can motivate others like I have been throughout my life.

Quinton Birt

Fortis Institute
Birmingham, Alabama

Hello, my name is Quinton Birt, I was a member of the army and I was the one who didn’t know what to do once I was out of the army in February 2018. I started working in a factory and at that moment I didn’t see myself doing that as a career. After a couple weeks of looking and thinking about what I want to do with my life is when I found Fortis Institute in Birmingham, Alabama. Since the first time I walked into the school I felt like family. Everyone made it their priority to know my name and my interest in school. I enrolled in the Dental Assisting program. During my time in school, and with my leadership skills I learned in the Army and my 3.62 GPA, I was selected to serve as a student Ambassador at Fortis for a period from August 2018 until graduation. Fortis also assisted me in obtaining my externship with Diamond Smiles Dentistry. When I finished the externship with Diamond Smiles Dentistry on March 25th, 2019, Doctor Edgar Luna offered me a full time job as a Dental Assistant. I am proud to say I am a Fortis Institution of Birmingham graduate student.
Anthony Wojciechowski

Fortis College
Mobile, Alabama

My experience at Fortis College – Mobile has been an interesting one. After I initially got out of the Marine Corps, I wasn’t entirely sure what I wanted to do. When I moved to Alabama and started looking at trades, HVAC/R seemed like the perfect fit for me. When I first enrolled at Fortis College, the process went by extremely smooth, and for any military member we can all agree that paper work is almost never smooth, but Fortis made it easy and within a week of enrolling I was in my first class. I can only speak of Fortis College-Mobile, but I would have to say this campus has some of the best instructors I’ve ever met.

The last thing is the campus and instructors do a great job accommodating veterans. We all have different ailments, and things wrong with us, but Fortis has done a great job in understanding this, and if we miss a day, or a week, they check in to make sure you’re okay and that if you need help they are willing to help. This is great for veterans, because we can sometimes feel like no one is in our corner and they definitely are.
My name is James Watkins, a military veteran with 25 years of service to the United States of America. I chose to go back to school as a means of working towards substantiating my career, my credentials and beginning anew after working in the field of Information Technology (IT) for the last three decades with a previous Bachelor’s degree obtained through traditional college/institutional means. I have recently achieved my quest to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems with the assistance and distinct pleasure/enjoyment of attending Charter College since March 2017 as an online student. Although some challenges were experienced throughout it, has been a great experience overall. The opportunity afforded by institutions such as Charter College provides the versatility that traditional universities and colleges no longer do.

Institutions such as Charter College provide the flexibility, freedom, and convenience for working adults to work towards and obtain advanced/higher educational learning degrees with top-notch instructors that have real world experience and applicability to the respective courses that are being taught enhances this learning experience. Furthermore, institutions such as Charter College allow completion of degrees in accelerated timeframes akin to traditional colleges of years past. The traditional colleges 4-year Bachelor degree programs and 2-year Associate degree programs of past years now predominantly take 5-years and 3-years respectively due to the availability of classes offered. The reason behind this extension of timelines for degree completion is courses do not match-up/align fluently/concurrently to allow for the completion of degrees in those timeframes anymore appearing to be by design.

Reducing the support to institutions such as Charter College will preclude this opportunity for working adults to obtain these degrees allowing for increased employment advancement opportunities. Unfortunately, this appears to be deliberate increasing the burden on the students by the reduction in Federal government support to these institutions resulting in securing greater financial support and income from the students upon the reduction in Federal governmental support. This is a travesty and should not be allowed.
My name is Larry and I am a proud father, devoted husband, loving son, hard-working Physical Therapist Assistant, and I am also a veteran.

After joining the U.S. Army Infantry at the age of 18, I was stationed in Fort Campbell, KY. It was during this time that I learned the most about myself. I served two overseas deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, for 12 months at a time.

After 5 years of active service, I moved to Mesa, AZ where I currently reside with my wife and 2 young daughters.

Education has always been important to me and my military service reinforced that I wanted to help people improve their physical health and quality of life. After earning my bachelors, I furthered my education through the PTA program at Carrington. This was an amazing experience.

While my job function has changed as a PTA, I continue to evolve my purpose of serving people in my community and am proud to be a Carrington Alumnus.
Breeanna Myers

Motorcycle Mechanics Institute | Universal Technical Institute
Phoenix, Arizona

Breeanna Myers enlisted in the Military as a member of the United States Army at the age of 17 years old and was in for roughly eight years. While in the Army, she was learning to rebuild computers and radios. This was the start she needed regarding technical knowledge that lead her to the Motorcycle Mechanics Institute (MMI).

She started MMI in September of 2016 and took Kawasaki, Suzuki, and Honda at first then ended with Harley-Davidson. She came to MMI because of her passion for motorcycles, to promote females in the industry, and to help veterans know that their life does not just end after the military and they can succeed at anything. She is currently attending Universal Technical Institute (UTI) for welding so she can open up her own shop for her and her son and be able to build custom bikes from scratch using both her motorcycle and welding knowledge.

While attending MMI, she was chosen by Buddy Stubbs Harley-Davidson to be a part of an International Bike Build-off team (Battle of the Kings) for Harley-Davidson. If their bike is chosen, they will get to go to Italy to compete against other top bikes from other countries. She is grateful for the opportunity, has put in countless hours and is using every bit of information she learned here from the school into the bike with her fellow classmate and the staff at Buddy Stubbs.
Scared. Nervous. Lost. These are not the words many people would use to describe a 20 year military veteran. However, this is exactly how I felt after I retired, especially with our first child on the way. The idea of completely changing your career from what you have known from the past 20 years is daunting. However, like the military it’s just another challenge to meet head on.

The day I went through the door to Carrington College I was greeted by the staff with big wide smiles, a friendly atmosphere and a very welcoming feeling. I received the campus tour pointing out state of the art simulators, new classrooms and I felt there was a genuine focus on preparing students to become RNs. My advisor was amazing, talking to me like a real person. I still receive calls from him every so often just to see how I’m doing and ask about our newborn.

After I was accepted as student we went through our orientation, met some of the faculty and learned what was expected of us as students. Towards the end of the orientation we all got to explain a little bit about ourselves to the rest of the students. I’ll never forget when I said I was retiring after 20 years, I got a hero’s welcome that felt like it lasted minutes and I knew I was making the right decision.

I’m still scared every so often but like most military members past and present it’s the challenge we crave. Becoming a RN is a challenge but when I’m finished I’ll be proud of what I have accomplished and will be serving the country again just in a different way.
Stephen Campbell

University of Advancing Technology
Tempe, Arizona

Stephen grew up in a small Kentucky farming community. He served in the U.S. Navy as a machinist mate for six years. During his time in the Navy, Stephen managed the testing and transfer of 19 million gallons of fuel. When he got out, he knew he wanted to pursue a degree in technology because he knew it was the way of the future.

Inspired to pursue a future-proof career in tech, Stephen enrolled in the CADD Institute—now the University of Advancing Technology—where he studied virtual reality back in 1993. “The technology was incredible and not like anything I had ever seen,” Stephen said. Stephen took every programming class that he could and practiced his CADD skills. He also had the opportunity to learn how the industry works, since his professors were all industry experts.

Stephen completed his master’s degree in technology leadership in 2016. Now he works as an admissions advisor at UAT and teaches programming classes as an adjunct faculty member. Both of his degrees help Stephen prepare the next generation of developers for successful careers in tech.
Refugio Dominguez

Carrington College
Mesa, Arizona

After high school, I joined the US Army as a generator mechanic for an airborne division. When I left the service, my sister-in-law, who is in the medical field, suggested I might enjoy a career in healthcare. I started looking around and found the physical therapy technology program at Carrington College. This program jumped out at me because it would give me the opportunity to interact with people one-on-one.

I was a physical therapy patient myself for a knee injury, and I know what it’s like to feel helpless. My physical therapy tech motivated me to do better and encouraged me to push forward, even when I was in pain. This experience motivated me to want to do the same for others.

I loved working with patients at my externship site, but when I left the military, I originally wanted to become a police officer. I faced a lot of discouragement, but the desire never left. So two months after I completed the PT program, I started the criminal justice program at Carrington, and it has opened my eyes to the many career possibilities that exist. It’s more than just “police officer” or “corrections officer.” The program has encouraged me to think about all the different avenues that are open to me. I can become a fraud investigator, a security professional – so many things. The program has posed probing questions, and I’m researching my options.

Whatever aspect of criminal justice I work in, I can be the change my community needs.
Isaac Morales

University of Advancing Technology
Tempe, Arizona

Isaac chose to study game design at the University of Advancing Technology for several reasons. His older brother vouched for UAT, and he liked the idea that he would retain intellectual property rights over anything he created during school. He also recognized the value of the individualized attention and help that each UAT student receives. “The fancy software and hardware helped too,” Isaac admitted.

During his first two years at UAT, Isaac spent nearly every day tinkering with software such as zBrush, Photoshop, Substance Painter, Unreal and Unity. He could not pinpoint a favorite class because “the classes just got better and more challenging every semester.” Isaac appreciated the thoughtful curriculum, but he also recognized the value of classroom discussions, critiques and projects, which helped him progress and develop a love for game development.

Isaac attributes his success to the help he received from UAT faculty and staff, who guide students toward their goals, while keeping it real with them. Isaac understood from day one that the gaming industry is super competitive. “Not one time was I guaranteed a job in my field. Instead, I was guaranteed a learning environment, tools and resources that would assist me in my success,” Isaac said. Furthermore, Isaac is thankful that UAT introduced him to diverse ideas, which he believes anyone attempting to obtain higher education should strive for.

After graduating with three bachelor’s degrees in game design, game art and business technology, Isaac launched his own indie game development studio, CubanMedica Productions. Before coming to UAT, Isaac served eight years in the U.S. Army as a medic.
My name is Tywannie. I am from Arizona and joined the military back in 2009. I signed on to be an airborne paratrooper. I was stationed at both Fort Bragg, NC then transferred to Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State. I spent the better part of 6 years in service. I did not deploy but I spent the majority of my time focusing on the education portion of being stateside. However, getting out of the military is when things really started to happen. I found that many of the skills and courses I took in the military, did not quite transfer over to the civilian education system. So, I set out to find something new to take on and found a culinary school. After obtaining my Associate’s degree, I immediately joined the workforce, only to discover the market was flooded with others seeking the same types of positions. During all of this, my amazing wife completed her education. She found Carrington College to be not only the closest but to have relatively high standards for education in the medical field. It was about a year after she finished that I decided it would be beneficial to pursue the medical field as well. Due to my wife’s success and Carrington’s high standards, I chose to attend Carrington College. Now it is my turn to set out in the medical field with my new certification in Physical Therapy Technology.
My name is Geoff and I am an Army combat veteran from central California. Upon completion of my contract with the Army I returned home to attend multiple colleges for various majors, in addition to endless career changes. I was exploring options for a new start in life where I could use my hands again which is what led me to SJVC and their Aviation Maintenance program. I had, at this point, expended my GI Bill® but figured I would give it a shot.

The finance team stuck with me throughout my tenure and ensured my financial wellbeing. My teachers pushed me to go above and beyond and push out of my comfort zone day in and day out. They assured me I would be successful in the field if I kept my bearing and remembered what I learned. During one of the school’s employer presentations, which they provide often, I received a sense of direction. Following the presentation I was able to secure an interview on the spot. Following discussions with my family I took a position working in Afghanistan with Columbia Helicopters on BV107 II helicopters. As soon as I completed testing, I started my position with the leading heavy lift helicopter company in the world. I have even had the opportunity to work on the highest time airframe in the rotor world. None of this would have been possible without the second (likely third or fourth) chance I received at SJVC on their aviation campus.
Visiting Korea, Afghanistan and jumping from airplanes are just a few of the experiences that have shaped me. I am an Army Staff Sargent. After serving my country for seven plus years it was time for me to take on a new challenge and set new goals for myself.

Exiting the military with the GI Bill® in hand gave me the opportunity to choose what field of study I would pursue. My grandmother had been sick and I was not happy with the level of care she had received. I made the decision to become a vocational nurse and I enrolled at the Institute of Technology in Clovis California. I liked helping people and wanted to make sure people needing quality care would be able to get it. The GI Bill® has paid for my education and provided me with enough money to live comfortably while focusing all my attention on studying and preparing for my career.

My uniform is no longer a US Army jump suit, now I wear medical scrubs. I spent the first part of my life defending the lives of Americans and the second part of my life I will I spend caring for the lives of Americans thanks to the GI Bill®.
My name is Corporal Richard III and I served for five years in the United States Marine Corps. I currently live in Sacramento, CA and am in my 5th term of Vet Tech school at the Sacramento campus at Carrington College. After being honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, I struggled to find my place in society, but after some serious thinking I rediscovered my passion for animals! Getting into the Vet Tech program was one of the greatest accomplishments of my life, and coming to Carrington was the absolute best decision I have ever made. I have learned so much in what seems like such a short time, and I know the skills I have learned will serve me very well in my future!

However, the successes were not without a few bumps in the road. It was easy to get discouraged by how overwhelming the course could be at times, but I never once considered giving up! I’m beyond honored to be part of the Carrington flock, and I hope to one day give back to the school that gave me the tools to achieve my life long dreams!
Kristyl Rodriguez
Bellus Academy
Poway, California

The Post-9/11 GI Bill® literally saved my life. I gave the Marine Corps my all while serving, so having the option to utilize my benefits to the capacity that I can is a blessing.

When service members transition out of the military we have to re-create ourselves. While that may come easy to some, it can be one of the most difficult things for the vast majority because you just don’t know where to begin. The GI Bill® has given not only me, but millions of others the opportunity to pursue their dreams with intention and urgency.

Coming to Bellus Academy was definitely a great decision. Not only do they deliver quality education to their students, but their programs are structured to better suit the various interests and craftsmanship of each individual. I will be graduating with a dual license – Cosmetology and Barbering, and that’s a huge return on investment. What made this school really stand out to me was their partnership with the VA, being an approved school for Veterans Educational Benefits. The best part about this is I’m able to connect and network with other veterans. We understand our history serving in the military, our sacrifice to our country, and our current endeavors to becoming successful and increasing the rates of business ownership and veteran success. I personally am on a mission to employ up to 15 Veterans when I open my establishment to pay the opportunities forward.
My name is Loversmile. I am from Philippines, a US Veteran, and currently enrolled in UEI Gardena. I believe education is the only wealth that cannot be lost or taken away from you. It is the only investment that does not depreciate. It fuels your aspirations in life and gives you wings to fly to attain the goals you have.

Growing up, my parents had to work hard in order to provide me and 10 other siblings the basic needs. Neither of my parents had an education beyond high school, so to give us a better future was very challenging due to very limited financial resources. I told myself that I didn’t want to be like them. I wanted to give my kids a greener future that I was deprived of growing up. It took me some time to assess myself on what it is I enjoy doing and that I can make a living out of it. It was even harder to take the first step after being out of school for several years.

I chose UEI because of the quick response and very accommodating staff. They helped me with my GI Bill® application, motivated me, and encouraged me to succeed. I got my first diploma in automotive technology in December 2018, and I am grateful for that experience. Now, I am working on my second diploma in HVAC. I want to get as much training as I can to be more flexible and to provide more for my family. I wouldn’t be in this stage of my life if that administration personnel did not say those encouraging words “You can do it. You will succeed.”
Debbie Marie

Unitek College
Sacramento, California

I am SPC Debbie Marie of the United States Army Reserve and currently stationed in CA. I have been enlisted for almost 2 years and grateful for all of the experiences I learned and earned in the US Army.

In order to enhance my service, aside from being a military personnel, I am currently working on my nursing career by going to Unitek College in Sacramento. They help students like me in making a way to pursue a desired career. By the end of the year, I should be able to finish my studies with flying colors, obtain my license and serve as a nurse as both a service member and a civilian.

Education is the most precious treasure we all can have. No one should take away that opportunity and choice for us to thrive in our desired career path.
My name is Lionel and I was born and raised in Malone, New York, a small town in the northern Adirondacks. After completing High School, I joined the Navy and spent the next 26 years in Naval Aviation as a weapon systems operator on the P-3C Orion aircraft. After retiring I realized how much I missed aviation and proceeded to get my private pilot’s license and enrolled in the Aviation Maintenance Technology Program at San Joaquin Valley College in Fresno, CA. This turned out to be the second best career decision I have made. I had a very extensive instructor background in the Navy. After graduating from the program I was asked to stay on as an instructor where I taught the General and Airframe portions of the course.

After nearly 8 years at SJVC I applied for and was selected to the position of Campus President. As a student and an instructor I witnessed the positive impact that SJVC and this program was having on the lives of the students as well as the passion that faculty, staff, and the College Senior Managers had for the success of the students. I had never witnessed this kind of commitment from any college I had attended.

Long story short, I encouraged my three sons and my son-in-law to enroll into the program and today all of them are working and doing well in the field and supporting their families. SJVC means everything to me and my family.
My name is Kourtney, and I am currently serving my fifth year in the United States Army Reserves. I am a 68H which is an optical laboratory specialist. My favorite memory while in the military so far is when I had the opportunity to travel to Guatemala on a humanitarian mission where we provided medical services to the local villages. We not only made an impact on their health but also got to be exposed to their culture. I was in charge of the optometry tent where I gave basic eye exams before them seeing the optometrist. Together, we would decide what prescription would be best, based on the patient’s eyesight and we would provide them with glasses that were close to what they needed. For most, affording glasses was near to impossible, so when they put on a pair for the first time, they would burst into tears. Mothers were able to finally see their children’s facial features clearly for the first time, and children were able to see their school work. It was an extremely humbling experience that I will never forget.

This humanitarian mission set the tone for my career choice. Helping others is extremely rewarding because of their lifestyle changes after getting the medical services that they needed. I knew Carrington College would be the best fit for me because of the hands-on training that they give their students. When I graduate from the surgical technology program, I know I will be prepared to help any patient that enters the OR.
Matthew Vance
San Joaquin Valley College
Visalia, California

Matthew is a native Californian and enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 19. He enlisted in the Marine Corps because he said he wanted a sense of purpose for his life. Now he is a student in the Respiratory Therapy program at San Joaquin Valley College in Visalia, CA.

Matthew served four years in the Marine Corps as an (ARFF) Aircraft Rescue Firefighter as well as in the (31st MEU unit) Marine Expeditionary Unit, where he was attached to a Navy fleet that toured the South Pacific. Matthew proudly served his country in the Marine Corps for four years. When Matthew completed his military service, he began working. He said he felt unfulfilled in his job and began to research other career options. He visited San Joaquin Valley College to learn about the program offerings and decided the Respiratory Therapy program was the best fit for him. He is currently in his 3rd term and expected to complete the program in March 2020. Matthew is doing well academically and enjoying the program. He is looking forward to the start of clinical rotations. He is excited to put his new found skills to use. His ultimate career goal is to get hired to work as a Respiratory Therapist in either an Emergency Department, an ICU or in medical transport. He feels his military training has prepared him to work well in stressful, fast paced environments. He looks forward to a future working in the medical field.
Thomas Terminal
Asher College
Sacramento, California

Thomas served in the Army for 4 years before receiving an honorable discharge. During his time in the Army he learned a wide variety of mechanical skills. Unfortunately prior to leaving the Armed Forces in August of 2015, he suffered a service related disability. This injury prevented him from seeking employment as a mechanic. For the next year he worked as a security guard, but as Thomas put it, “the hours were sporadic and the pay was not consistent.” During this time he also took on the responsibility of supporting his 19 year old brother. To say these were lean times would be an understatement. By the time Thomas and his brother came to Asher College their car had become their permanent residence. Thomas and his brother both enrolled in the Computer Specialist and Networking Technology Applied Associates Degree program. For the first year of school, Thomas and his brother remained homeless, infrequently finding temporary shelter. During that time Thomas never missed a day. He was a model student maintaining a 3.32 GPA and receiving all his industry certifications. In June he completed his program and received his Applied Associates Degree. There were days we knew he was coming to school with very little rest, little food and nowhere to really make himself presentable for school. But he kept coming. He kept persevering. And I am proud to say the Asher College team found ways to quietly meet some his most pressing needs.

Today, he and his brother have stable housing and life is looking bright. They have both graduated and received their degrees and Thomas has chosen to come back to Asher for additional higher level IT Certifications. When I was interviewing him for this article I asked him what he would want people to know. He said, “in basic training I learned determination. Never be willing to surrender.” Thank you for teaching us such an important lesson by living that out every day. Thomas, you and your brother will forever be a part of the Asher College family.
My name is Stephen, and this is how I ended up studying at Aviation Institute of Maintenance and became an FAA Certified Aircraft Mechanic. But first I feel like I must explain how I became so passionate about aviation. When I was 13, I saw a film called “Fly Away Home”. The movie follows the story of a little girl who found a couple dozen unhatched goose eggs and raised them. This girl used an aircraft to teach the geese how to fly and then as “mama goose” she took an epic journey south teaching her baby geese the important lesson of flying south for the winter. This instilled a passion in me for animals and aviation. Now that you know how my passion for aviation was born, you should know what circumstances lead to my arrival at AIM in 2017. In 2007, 10 years prior, I joined the USAF. I became an Aviator and joined the 2% of the USAF that takes to the skies. In 2011 I deployed to Afghanistan and returned home safe in 2012. After my honorable discharge in 2013 I decided to go back home to Vieques, Puerto Rico where I was raised. I quickly went to work as a tour guide. Despite the fact that I truly love interacting with new people and teaching about my home, I still felt like I wanted to get back to my true passion, Aviation. Then I got in contact with Leah Aragon from AIM. She was very helpful and eager to get me whatever information I needed in a timely manner and she was always able to provide me with good, actionable information.
Matthew McAndrews
San Joaquin Valley College
Fresno, California

As a prior military member with only military qualifications, it’s hard to use that knowledge in the civilian world. Most employers don’t understand what or where you come from, but this school does. This school helped me take my military knowledge and experience, and turn it into earning a certificate for the civilian sector of aviation. This school is also very veteran friendly. They understand the hardship of trying to transition to civilian life, and make the learning style familiar to what you can comprehend and actually understand. While at school at SJVC I completed all of my courses, maintained a great GPA, earned dean’s list every semester, and now am able to work. This school gave me that opportunity. I now have gotten offered the job of a lifetime because of what this school gave me; in structure, knowledge, and experience. I am grateful and glad I was able to attend such a school.
I went to college quite a bit after I left the military. In a normal degree program, the process can be very tedious and boring for someone that does not really enjoy being in school. So after a while I started to do a little research online into programs that had a more real-world learning feel to it. I decided on Medical Assisting because of the diverse options for employment. There were a lot of jobs in different specialties that I could go in to and if things were not to my liking I could simply apply for another job as a Medical Assistant in a different type of clinic.

The process of starting school as a Veteran is fairly easy now. Most schools have someone on staff that can assist and get in touch with someone to coordinate the funding through the GI Bill® and if the particular school you are looking into does not have someone to assist, the process isn’t so complex that you couldn’t figure out yourself. They provided full tuition as well as a stipend equal to the military basic allowance for housing for pay grade E-5 so if you really wish to dedicate yourself to the experience you don’t even have to work, depending on your individual need of course. In all honesty it would be nearly impossible to attend a course like this without the support that the GI Bill® provides for education. Out of all the benefits that stem from military service, the GI Bill® would be the most valuable.

Cambridge Junior College was a great experience. There was a lot of hands on learning and not just the typical higher education feel of sitting in a desk being lectured to. You learn practical skills that will definitely be put to use once you graduate and become a professional Medical Assistant. I would and have highly recommended other Veterans to attend the Cambridge Junior College because it provides a purpose and thorough training to be efficient in the medical field.
My name is Kelly McWhorter, a nine year veteran of the USN and USNR and senior student at the Design Institute of San Diego (DISD). I want to share my story and sincere gratitude for receiving GI benefits to attend a specialized college. My deep hope is that future students continue to receive such outstanding opportunities.

I sought my commission as a Surface Warfare Officer to not only serve my country, but because I had few other opportunities. I graduated with a sociology degree in 2008 when the economy was crumbling and I had $65,000 in college debt. While grateful my degree led to commissioning, once I finished serving I was again left with only a generic degree. I worked miserably as a program manager, depressed and wondering what my life would look like.

I always had a passion for interior design and found DISD-a school tailored to second career adults looking to obtain a marketable skill set and degree. DISD offered a BFA in interior design with a fast track program that meant I would earn my degree in 2.5 years instead of four. Attending a small niche school led to outstanding success redirecting my life. The 10-12 student class size means that I received instruction tailored to the way I learn. I wasn’t lost on a large campus of post high-schoolers. The staff knew who I was, where I needed help and encouragement, and replaced my military support system. Please ensure the next generation of designers that will help solve our housing crisis or create VA hospital spaces that encourage healing have the chance to receive such a special degree.
Andrew Monaghan

Institute of Technology - Clovis
Clovis, California

I am United States Marine Corp Veteran Andrew Monaghan from Lemoore, California. I graduated high school in 2008 and a month later was in boot camp. For four years I helped keep the Marine Corp running as a logistics specialist. My journey took me many places including Afghanistan and eventually brought me back home to Lemoore. Following my military service I took a number of dead end jobs – I worked at a donut shop, did well drilling and installed solar panels.

Later, a friend suggested I use my GI Bill® and enroll in a program that would train me to work in the field of industrial maintenance and automated technology. The program at the Institute of Technology in Clovis California ended up being the perfect fit for me. It blended my understanding of logistics from the military with my desire to work with my hands. Having the GI Bill® allowed me to focus on school and not worry about working. That freedom made me a better student. Nearing graduation I have already been hired in my field of study.

I gave four years to my country but the GI Bill® is giving me an education that will last a lifetime.
Marvin Ruano

San Joaquin Valley College
Lancaster, California

My name is Marvin Ruano and I am an U.S. Veteran attending San Joaquin Valley College (SJVC) in Lancaster. I served in the United States Marine Corps for eight years. I served in two combat tours to Iraq (2003 and 2005). After I got married, I decided to change my career. My first choice was in law enforcement. I have come a long way. I am attending school while taking care of my wife and six children. If I’ve learned something in my life, it is, to never give up or quit. I purposed in my heart to always do my best. I want to continue to give my service to this country as well as serve the public and make a difference in their lives. I am passionate in making a positive difference in my community and helping others.

My journey towards a criminal justice career path has been challenging yet very rewarding. I made it my goal to enhance my knowledge in the criminal justice system. So, I decided to go back to school and pursue a degree majoring in criminal justice studies. Upon completing my Bachelor’s degree in May 2018 from California State University of Northridge (CSUN) I grew an interest in becoming a Corrections Officer. In July 2018 I enrolled at SJVC-Lancaster with an objective of becoming certified through the criminal justice corrections academy program. Also, to get hands-on experience in applying proper correctional procedural duties. The training curriculum and certifications interested me.

Here, at SJVC-Lancaster I honestly enjoyed the paramilitary structure. I got a sense of the pride, honor, courage and commitment that it takes to work within the corrections or law enforcement profession. I appreciated being instructed by instructors who are very experienced in the field. Through the criminal justice program, I have gained professionalism skills. I was part of the Corrections Academy Class 8 and our class motto was geared in “excellence”. That motto has inspired me to keep striving for excellence. I feel my experiences here at SJVC has prepared me for a successful career in corrections. For that reason, I have recently applied with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and with the Victorville Federal Prison for a Corrections Officer position. I am looking forward to a great career within the corrections department.
Adrian Robles came to West Coast University-Ontario as a transfer student. After 8 years of service in the United States Marine Corps, he was seeking an accelerated nursing program that was respected. For him, leaving the Marines was a difficult decision.

“My goal leaving the Marines was to help stop the rise in veteran-related mental health emergencies,” he said. “Having deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan, I felt I could play an instrumental part in positively impacting the veteran population.”

After searching and speaking to previous graduates of WCU, Robles felt confident that WCU was the right choice but what he experienced far exceeded his expectations. “I was not sure I would find the same feeling of comradery and cohesiveness with classmates that I had experienced in the Marines,” he said. “But from the first day until now, heading into my last term of the program, I have felt supported, empowered, and treated with respect. All the clinical sites were full of great experiences and accompanied by practicing professional nurses as clinical instructors. Each of my theory professors were quality nursing professionals that gave great insight into the art of nursing. I know I made a great decision by choosing WCU as my school and feel fully prepared to face the challenges as a new graduate nurse.”
Christopher Bazley

Unitek College
Ontario, California

Christopher is a current IT student at Unitek College in Concord, CA. Inspired by his father’s military service, Chris joined the US Air Force and spent 6 years working in Medical Logistics. He was based in Florida, Germany, South Korea and Kyrgyzstan.

After leaving the Air Force he heard about Unitek College through the Swords to Plowshares program. Chris says, “I’ve always had a strong passion for computers. My friends would tell me I should do this because I’m good at it although I sometimes have gotten a little carried away and fried a few motherboards by accident.”

Chris enrolled at Unitek in November, 2018 and soon made the Dean’s List for academic performance. He also works part time as a Federal Work Study student at the Monument Crisis Center.

Chris’s goal after graduation is to launch his career in IT Cyber Security.
There’s no stopping someone who is curious, hungry for knowledge, and determined to succeed. Among graduates through the University’s nearly 21-year history, Douglas occupies a unique place unmatched by any other alum – he holds four master’s degrees from Trident.

It wasn’t just a love of learning that drove Douglas, it was a mix of timing and his desire to set his family up for success. “Since I retired from the military a month too early, I wasn’t able to transfer my GI Bill® to my children,” says Douglas. “I decided to invest in myself and improve my professional position so I hit the books and didn’t stop. My thought was I need to be the best I can be to help support both my daughters’ college dreams.”

Jonathan Douglas is a Marine veteran and is a graduate of Trident’s Master of Arts in Education (‘14), Master of Science in Information Technology Management (‘12), Master of Science in Health Sciences (‘11), and Master of Business Administration (‘06) programs.
Damien Mange
San Joaquin Valley College
Bakersfield, California

My time in the military provided me opportunities that very few get to experience. For all that it was: the good, the bad, the dangerous, I will always be grateful for the lessons that it gave me. I have spent thousands of hours behind a helicopter’s machine gun, flying ambassadors, commanders, and heads of states, to locations, both disclosed and undisclosed, to make decisions that impact lives on a national level. I’ve had the privilege of working alongside the fiercest fighters of America’s Special Operations community and the sobering honor of bringing home the flagged-wrapped bodies of America’s fallen.

None of the lessons that I walked away with can be summed up neatly or completely, but there are some key points that have become such a strong part of my life, even now as a civilian. One such lesson is that of being ‘efficient and effective’. Everything that we did under our nation’s banner was done in manners that would maximize those two ideals. I say this to convey why I chose SJVC. I was looking for programs that would provide me the knowledge and skill set to get into the workforce quickly and be effective once I was there. With an 18-month course, the program I selected shall fulfill that requirement. As a husband and father, my continued mission is to provide and care for my family as ‘efficiently and effectively’ as I can. SJVC’s accelerated program focuses the curriculum to maximize my time spent on campus and on clinical site. It was my privilege to serve our great nation, and I look forward to serving in our community, and will be able to do so because of the education that I am receiving here at SJVC. Thank you and God bless America.
Tyler Rios

Intercoast College
Sacramento, California

Tyler is a student at InterCoast Colleges in the HVAC Technician Program at the Sacramento, California Campus. Tyler chose to attend InterCoast Colleges because the institution was one of the few colleges around the geographical area that offered the training he wanted and that he could complete his certificate program in less than a year.

Tyler attended a four-year college before he joined the Army, but found that the teaching style at a traditional college did not work for him. He decided to enlist in the army. After receiving his honorable discharge, Tyler decided to enroll in the HVAC program at InterCoast.

Tyler quickly realized that he really appreciated attending a Trade school instead of a traditional college because the training is structured and the expectations are clearly outlined at InterCoast, similar to the way they are outlined in his military service. Tyler states that he prefers to work in an environment where the expectations are clearly outlined. Tyler says he can now focus on his career and not concern himself with selecting and registering for classes that may not be available in future semesters.

The hands-on practical training greatly helped Tyler learn the skills he is using today. “People going to school for two or three years aren’t getting as much knowledge as I am getting here.” Tyler says. The traditional college did not provide him with the support services that he receives from InterCoast. Tyler says his instructor is very knowledgeable, and the staff is friendly and approachable. “The instructors and staff have been very helpful, even staying after class to help answer questions about the lesson, or even to give advice about working in the field”, says Tyler. Tyler is currently working as a utility engineer, and is looking forward to finishing his certificate program at InterCoast and applying it the current employment in order to move up to a higher paying role in the industry.
Amanda Strout

Design Institute of San Diego
San Diego, California

I grew up the daughter of a military family and then I served as a public affairs representative for the US Air Force during my time in service. When I separated, military life was all I had known. Upon separating, I made the natural transition into public relations and marketing and it was after many years in that field that I discovered my true passion of interior design. Knowing so specifically what I wanted to do steered my college search, and ultimately brought me to the Design Institute of San Diego.

From the initial phone conversation with one of the staff members, I knew this was the place I was meant to attend. In finding DISD, I also found a culture of kindness, support and people who understand the way creative minds work. Being able to use my GI Bill® benefits to attend a college with such a specific program has allowed me to fully maximize what this benefit is meant to do – to prepare and equip me to transition into the career I am passionate about and ultimately lead a successful civilian life as a veteran.
Chiufei Ma
Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Fremont, California

Graduate student Chiufei from Oakland, CA was in the USMC from 2012 to 2016 doing Aviation Ordinance. He dealt with anything and everything that armed the plane; from building bombs to maintaining bomb racks and the trailers used to carry them. He was always interested in aviation and liked to work with his hands. He wanted to see what this field of aviation had to offer and what we else he could learn. He enrolled in the Aviation Institute of Maintenance, Fremont campus and while in school he trained to become a licensed A & P mechanic. Coming into school he knew a bit about the regulations and policies about working on aircraft, but he did not have the technical knowledge. He is currently working towards getting his A & P license. His favorite classes in school were sheet metal and nonmetallics. They were some of the few classes that was primarily hands-on. In a week or so he will be applying to Thales, Panasonic, JetBlue, and United. Eventually he would like to get his pilot’s license.
Cody York
California College San Diego
San Marcos, California

“I began my educational journey at a community college, but it wasn’t the right fit for me. Most of the students were 18-20 years old at the community college and could not relate to who I was and where I have come from. I did some research and found California College San Diego (CCSD). What drew me to CCSD was that over half the student body were veterans and we are all cut from the same cloth. We related with our life experiences in ways that the students at the community college didn’t.

CCSD faculty gave 110%. What I mean by that is the instructors would tutor you one on one outside of class when needed. They would work with you in getting certifications for the IT industry. When it came time to start an internship, CCSD was there to support me by way of working my school schedule around my internship schedule. The Dean of technology played a great role by being a hands on leader with the students.

Being a 44 year old veteran returning to school is no easy feat. Many of us veterans suffer from PTSD. With that being said, we walked the mile in each others’ shoes, built life time relations in school and outside by creating study groups. This made it easier being in class when you know many of your peers have your back and you can relax a little more. It is already difficult for some to start a new chapter in their life this late in the game.”
I came to SJVC on November 14, 2017. I was granted admission within two weeks of my meeting with the head counselor. The school is broken up into three major sections making learning the information easier to digest. These three sections are general, airframe, and powerplant. Each section requires a written test, oral questions, and practical application. The instructors have prepared me for these requirements.

I have since taken my general and airframe written test. I have already received several possible job leads and I still have two weeks left at school. San Joaquin Valley College has made my goal of being in the aviation field possible in a short seventeen months. Without this school, I would have had to travel beyond a hour to get to the nearest aviation school in my area. They are affordable, reliable, and produce a great working staff. Come April 16th, 2019, I will have graduated and moved on to the field I have been trying to reach for two years.
Tyler was born and raised in Colorado. After high school he worked a few years and then joined the Marine Corps. He was trained to be a Weather Forecaster and was posted for a tour of duty in Hawaii.

After finishing his enlistment, Tyler and his wife moved to the Bay area to be closer to her family and he decided he needed to go back to school. He said, “I’ve always wanted to do something with computers.” He attended a couple of different community colleges in the area, but didn’t find the type of education he was looking for.

While surfing the web one day, he discovered Unitek College in Concord and decided to visit. He was immediately struck by the engagement from the IT faculty and the friendliness of his admissions representative. He was also impressed by the quality of the IT classroom and lab facilities and decided to enroll in November of 2018.

He is now in his 5th module and has earned a spot on the Dean’s List. He enjoys both the server side and the network side of administration. After graduation, he hopes to work towards his goal of becoming an IT sales engineer.
After serving in the Navy, Kyle Schneider looked to find a profession that he could be passionate about. He wanted to use this opportunity to serve as not only an inspiration to himself but his future children.

“I just wanted to better my life,” he said. “Because once my kids start to get of age of going to college then I want them — I don’t have kids yet — but once I do, I want them to be able to say ‘Hey, dad went to college maybe I could go too.’”

Schneider found the West Coast University Dental Hygiene program and felt an immediate connection.

“Learning that as dental hygienists we’re doing the extra-oral, intra-oral exams and checking for lesions for certain types of cancer, I think that’s the best part so far,” he said. “Just learning that we’re going to be saving lives and not just cleaning teeth like everybody thinks.”

The one thing Schneider knows he’ll miss about school is the connection he made to his cohort.

“Being part of a cohort class that really comes together and sticks together and helps each other,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if you’re older than me or younger than me, if you know it and I don’t, then I’m going to ask. And every single one of them, when I ask, they bend over backwards to help. This is like my dental hygiene family.”
My name is Ruben Jara, a military veteran who served a 2.5-year enlistment as a Parachute Rigger for the United States Army. I joined the armed forces at age 19. By age 21 I returned to the “real world” with doors wide open knowing the benefits I was granted post-military career by the government would serve me amazingly well for my future ahead. In retrospect, when I joined the Army I had no idea of the many benefits I would have in and out of the military. All I wanted to do is live an adventure, jump out of planes and gain discipline.

Little did I know, the benefits I have received after I departed from the military would truly shape my future to one that I could not have had otherwise. Returning home to California, I finished my first college degree using the Post 9-11 GI Bill®. I paid little to nothing out-of-pocket for my first bachelor’s thanks to the military. Fast forward years later, I am now 31, and working on my second bachelor’s at Design Institute of San Diego. Again, using the GI Bill® that has facilitated my education by covering most of my expenses at this college.

The Design Institute is a great educational program for us future designers. It is a small university but the quality of faculty, staff and students is amazing. I was impressed that my GI Bill® would even qualify for this program, but it did! Thankfully. I am a firm believer that there is an opportunity for great success post-military, and it is with the aid of veteran benefits, welcoming educators like those at Design Institute, and the government’s financial support that lets us thrive.
Growing up in Kansas City, Missouri, I was always fascinated by fashion, photography and cosmetology. I joined the Marine Corps as a photographer to gain more on the job experience, yet I had felt that even though I had learned discipline and commitment, that I still didn’t have any passion for what I was doing. As I transitioned to a civilian, I had heard about Bellus Academy, a fantastic cosmetology school. I found great mentors, who are just as passionate about the craft and who also care about giving students every opportunity to be successful. I couldn’t have asked for a better transition, Bellus has the structure I was used to, but keeping class creative and fun. I have been taught a craft and I am continuously encouraged every day to learn and expand my knowledge of my craft. The Marine Corps instilled a great foundation to be the best person I could be, but Bellus gave me passion and more than just a skill set. Bellus gave me my future.
My name is Delvi and I am a 31 year old automotive technician student at UEI College. I joined the Army in February of 2006 and was medically retired in January 2015. I had completed 2 tours by then. My first tour lasted 15 months in Iraq and the other lasted 4 months in Afghanistan. My MOS was 12B Combat Engineer. Our job downrange was basically clearing routes and looking for EFPs EEOs and everything that didn’t look right. After everything that I had been through with my 40th eng Battalion. I had to get Brain Surgery because I had bleeding in my brain. It hurt when the doctor told me that if I had not been diagnosed I would have died in 2 weeks. I had the surgery done March 11, 2011. I was in a coma for a month and when I came back I couldn’t walk, talk or eat. I was in therapy took almost 3 years after the surgery to start learning everything again. After I got divorced I started to look for a school and use my post 9/11 bill to help me cover my schooling. A lot of people believe that with PTSD you are unable to live a normal life. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, TBI and after brain surgery I am graduating as an Automotive Technician with straight As and I didn’t even know how to change the oil in a car before. The UEI College teachers really help me turn my life around. I was a homeless vet sleeping in my tuck just a year ago now I am in a much better place.
I served for 5 years in the Navy as a Hospital Corpsman. The one experience that stood out to me the most is the time I made a difference in a service member’s life. I received a message from one of my fellow Corpsman who was overseas, late at night. He asked if I could check up on one of the Marines he served with because he was posting some things on social media that placed that Marine at risk for self-harm. Upon finding that Marine at the bar, I took him back to my room to talk. We spoke for hours and it was really difficult to establish that life was worth living for him. He was not able to handle the loss of his fellow Marines and was finding it difficult to adapt to life back in the states. We eventually came to a partial resolution for him to visit with a Psychological technician at the clinic.

For the first time in my career, I really felt like I made a difference and served my country. Any one of us can be the last line of hope to prevent your patients, clients and fellow individuals from hurting themselves. We can all serve our country by keeping the minds of our fellow man intact.
Brittany Ayers

West Coast University
Los Angeles, California

Being a human nurse was not always what Brittany Ayers had in mind when she started working in the medical field.

“I didn’t always want to be a nurse. I started off as an animal technician,” Ayers said. “But after becoming an LVN (licensed vocational nurse) in the military I kept working with humans and here I am today!”

Ayers had a desire to further her career in nursing and found that West Coast University was the perfect fit for her.

“I loved West Coast University and still do. I like the camaraderie and atmosphere of West Coast,” she said. “The teachers were always available to give any outside help. They offered tutoring too. It was just helpful all the way around.”

After graduating with her bachelor of science in nursing, Ayers decided to come back to her alma mater to gain her family nurse practitioner license. Now, she works as a labor and delivery nurse, caring for and supporting new mothers.

“The best part of being a labor and delivery nurse is being able to help women at probably one of the hardest parts of their life,” Ayers said. “Helping them get through when they feel like they can’t go on, being there to push them through it and then seeing them get that happy ending is the most rewarding part.”
Ramon De Jesus
San Joaquin Valley College
Madera, California

I served in the US Air Force as a tactical Aircraft Maintainer for eight years. In that time, I injured my back and my knees. After the military, I needed to find a career that did not affect my back or my knees. After doing some research, I discovered that San Joaquin Valley College offered a Medical Office Program. I have always been interested in the medical field, so I decided to give it a try. I’m glad I did! My experience at SJVC was great. Not only did I find a career that I enjoy, I also made great friends and I had some of the best teachers I could have hoped for. I highly recommend SJVC to anyone that wants to make a career change. I even have some family that decided to go to SJVC. SJVC gave me the opportunity to continue to work after getting injured in the military.
My experience at Design Institute of San Diego (DISD) has been nothing short of astounding. Everything I expected from a disciplined institution I found it in this school. When I was recruited into the Marine Corps I didn’t think too much into our GI Bill® benefits. When my time in this beloved institution came to an end I knew I could only accept to immerse myself into a school that was razor sharp focused on the career development of their students. My transition out of the service was as easy I imagined. Filled with fear of the future, anxiety ridden and confused I searched for a school that could provide me with an environment in which I was not only accepted but taken care of. I searched for a place that could closely resemble the “esprit de corps”. I found that DISD held the same atmosphere I shared with my Marines; a place filled with highly driven, self-disciplined, highly motivated individuals. My enrollment, financial aid assistance and transition into student life was created to fit my needs and was a seamless process. I am extremely thankful that our GI Bill® school benefits allowed me to find the school that would welcome me with open arms and strong support from the staff and faculty.
Takieshia Beck
Carrington College
Sacramento, California

After my service ended, I became a stay-at-home mom. I knew this wouldn’t be permanent and I didn’t have any college experience so I decided to attend school. Medicine has always interested me. My only problem was the many branches to choose from. I love pregnancy and childbirth because all of the changes the human body can handle is amazing. Unfortunately, my daughter was not in school full-time so I couldn’t attend classes on campus to become an Obstetrician. I looked into what online courses were being offered and chose a career path that would not only help me earn experience in the Medical field, but I could see myself enjoying. I am studying Medical Billing and Coding and am currently 5 weeks away from completing the course. I’ve maintained honors so far and walk in June so I’m feeling pretty accomplished. The best part is being a positive role model for my family.

Steven Rowland
Cambridge Junior College
Yuba City, California

My name is Steven Rowland, and I earned my Associate of Science in Business Administration with an emphasis in Accounting at Cambridge Junior College. The staff was great and made it a good learning environment. I served in the Air Force, so I was able to use my GI Bill®. I would hear horrible stories how there was a delay with schools working with the VA. My experience was very good with the school and there were no hiccups like I was expecting. I felt the school helped me get in a better position to start my career. I am now the co-owner of R&R Professional Services. We are a payroll, bookkeeping and income tax small business in Yuba City, CA. I give credit to Cambridge and its teachers for preparing me to have the tools to be successful.
Anthony Monahan
San Joaquin Valley College
Fresno, California

Going to college after high school was the last thing I wanted or thought I’d be able to do. I’d become discouraged as I watched my peers’ acceptance letters pour in. No one seemed to want or need me until I received an unexpected call from Sgt. Martinez asking about my interest in the Army. I enlisted at seventeen and left for Ft. Jackson, S.C., a month after I graduated. I had some of the best times of my life while I was in. I met all sorts of people, each sharing a unique experience of the distant place they called home. They became my brothers and sisters, and together we built a home away from home.

It was painful closing that chapter of my life, but I don’t regret a second. I’m glad I didn’t go to college right after I graduated high school. I wasn’t ready for that level of commitment, and I’m lucky I recognized that. I had no idea what I wanted to do for the rest of my life or even who I wanted to be. I didn’t then, but I know now: I am a medic. I was put on this earth to help those who can’t help themselves, and I’ll die before I stray from this path. This journey is going to last my lifetime, but it’s starting at SJVC.
For every veteran, the slow, arduous, and daunting path of civilian transition is a littered road. Covered in anxiety, confusion, doubt, and loneliness. “How do I act around these ‘normal’ people?” “Do they even understand me?” “How do I fit in?” Dealing with the real life personification of these questions only adds to the fear...

Yet, it was a fear that subsided once I attended Bellus’ Poway location for their Barbering program. It seemed as if the staff were on the same emotional plane as I was because their understanding of WHO I was seemed genuine. Receiving a student with 5 Special Operations combat deployments into one’s midst might be “scary” for anyone but Bellus handled it with grace. The level of professionalism and emotional understanding really helped me in my transition to a professional world I once viewed with apprehension and even disdain. I couldn’t have asked for a better stepping stone, both personally and professionally, from an even better organization.

I commend this school not only for their apparent experience with the veteran community, but also for their apparent and clear enthusiasm in our future success.
Topacio Jones

San Joaquin Valley College
Hesperia, California

She renewed her passion for higher education and dedication of serving others by relying on her previous military experience. Topacio met many challenges while seeking out a degree at SJVC Hesperia that ranged from establishing permanent housing for her family to obtaining a full-time position to help her lead a successful life.

“I relied on my Army training and never quit attitude to help me balance school life, raising a daughter, and finding full-time employment.”

Topacio is also a natural leader in the classroom, where she applied her military training while participating in complex problem-solving exercises, and group assignments. Her ability to work with a diverse group of students shined as she helped her fellow students see and become their best.

“The Army taught me that teamwork is essential to meet all the challenges of life, whether that takes place at work, in life, and or in the classroom.”

Her passion for service directly motivates her to find success by helping others. Topacio Jones’ goal is to establish a nonprofit organized that is designed to help Veterans transition from military to civilian life.
My name is Wendell, and I was born in Tarzana, CA. I chose to come to UEI because of the Automotive Technician program. This program teaches us basic general skills of the automobiles. I have always seen myself as someone good with working with my hands and my past job experience in the automotive field at Jiffy Lube was very motivating. It was also motivating to go into the automotive technician program because of my grandfather. He was a junior mechanic for the post office. I wanted to choose something that I had experience in and learn more about. I enjoyed the general knowledge in cars and was hopeful for a future and career. I want to give myself and my family a better life. I see myself going to work every day to feed my family and give them the things that not only they have always wanted, but what I want to give them as their provider.

I like the automotive technician program because it is interesting to me to learn about cars and all their components. I never get tired of talking and learning about cars. Instead of just looking at other people to fix cars, I thought it would be good for me to become more educated so that I could know what’s going on. Mainly, I want a career in the automotive field so that I can become a productive member of society and benefit mankind. Finally, I chose UEI because I was offered the opportunity to receive my education in only 10 months and I love that the schedule fits my living day life. I’ve tried going to community colleges but honestly, I don’t see myself going to school for years. I am going to take advantage of this great opportunity.
Jessie Ingraham

Denver College of Nursing
Denver, Colorado

Professors have never hesitated to find time to sit one-on-one with me and go over any topic until I had a great understanding and all of my questions were answered. It didn’t matter if these topics were covered in the curriculum, personal in nature or professional development. Each professor knew the name of every student in my cohort and my assigned cohort has a camaraderie that makes me feel like a part of a family. I’ve been pushed intellectually, socially, emotionally and professionally and I can identify the growth I have made during my time at DCN. Clinical experiences have allowed me to gain confidence moving forward in the nursing profession and I will be proud to say I’m a graduate of The Denver College of Nursing at all of my interviews. I will graduate DCN with my Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing and have no financial debt. My last Commander in the Army wrote on my key developmental officer evaluation report that I was too compassionate to be a leader. DCN has welcomed and embraced that compassion in caring for and advocating for people in some of the hardest times in their lives.

I believe I have the right to attend the college of my choice because I gave up every human right during my time in the Army. I realized the one thing I had control over was my future outside of the Army. I have done my due diligence through research, comparison, analysis and asking questions to ensure the college I chose to attend offered me the best opportunity for success both financially and academically. I was always taught never to offer my opinion without offering possible solutions.

Knowledge truly is power, and changing a culture takes more time and man power than pointing blame does. In the Army the mission always came first, followed by gym time, drinking and video games. Education could definitely be emphasized much more starting in basic training and continued through the Soldier for Life Transition Program (SFL-TAP). More in depth teaching and guidance for choosing a college and area of interest prior to and during SFL-TAP would greatly benefit those transitioning Soldiers who may not understand what to look for in a college.
Chef Tiffany Moore uses the kitchen as a means of healing and hopes to promote the same feelings in her customers. Moore, affectionately known as Chef TiffMo, is the co-owner of the well-known event hall, Cascade, in South West Atlanta. She is also a personal chef and event planner.

While serving in the U.S. Army, and during her deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, she realized that food and event planning made her soul happy. After 11 years of service and two cervical spine surgeries, she set out to channel her passion into starting a business.

She loves serving food and assisting with events because it helps her connect with people on a deeper level. Her greatest fulfillment is helping create special memories that people will cherish for the rest of their lives. In addition to her businesses, Moore lends her time to mentoring and motivating aspiring chefs as well as working with multiple charities around Atlanta. Above all else, she is devoted to her son and her mother, who she credits as being her biggest inspirations.

In April of 2018, Moore enrolled in the online culinary arts program through the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts. Her commitment to her education has led her to be not only an exemplary student, but also a peer. Most notably, she was one of the first participants in the school’s farm-to-table experience weekend, traveling all the way to Chicago to partake.
My name is Alphonso Brown and I am a veteran attending Lincoln College of Technology using my GI Bill®. I served in the United States Air Force. I was stationed at F.E Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming as Security Forces in the 90 MSFS from 2011-2018. I ultimately accrued 8 years of service.

Seeking a new career path and knowing I had useable benefits that I earned, I enrolled in Lincoln Tech, Denver in the HVAC program in January 2019. Many service members enlist or seek commission in a career with relative security while being able to respectfully serve their country and reap the benefits of doing so. One of the main benefits is schooling, either during service, or using military training and formal schooling within the military, as a starting point for a career outside of the military.

Through the HVAC program at Lincoln Tech, which is paid for by the VA, I can embark on a new journey and career. While in this program, I have the ability to learn the mechanics of the HVAC system in depth, including the physics involved in air conditioning and refrigeration systems. The teaching process also includes hands on projects, such as component familiarization, component assembly/disassembly, troubleshooting, creating the piping for HVAC systems, building a system for operation, electrical systems, and visiting actual sites with operational refrigeration and air conditioning systems. These are critical tools to be successful within the industry and the school and faculty are happily providing the training to their students. The faculty at Lincoln Tech in the HVAC program are knowledgeable about the career field and are eager to see us learn, share stories and experiences, and see the students strive in the industry. I myself am fond of it and appreciate it.

It is my professional opinion that many people choose four-year degrees for the long-term payoff in important lucrative careers and I understand that, and support it. Yet, just as many prefer technical institutions to get the career rolling sooner due to personal preference, needs, or goals. Some people need or want immediate, serious careers, and they should be afforded that opportunity. Many of the skills taught at technical schools are used every moment of most days and the goal of VA benefits is ultimately to give back to the veterans to either provide or support functioning members of society.
I’m so thankful to Pima Medical Institute for giving me a career I enjoy! I love getting up and coming to work every day. I feel like I have purpose and I am confident I make a difference in children’s lives.

Seeking a new career path and knowing I had usable benefits that I earned, I enrolled in Lincoln Tech, Denver in the HVAC program in January 2019. Many service members enlist or seek commission in a career with relative security while being able to respectfully serve their country and reap the benefits of doing so. The main benefit is schooling, either during service, or using military training and formal schooling within the military, as a starting point for a career outside of the military.

I was nervous being a little older than most of my classmates, but it actually worked to my advantage. I was really grateful to be able to further my education and I had a maturity level that helped me to focus. My instructors were great and I felt prepared starting my externship and, actually, quite comfortable performing blood draws and dealing with the patients.

I am currently working at Children’s Hospital as a full-time Medical Assistant float and I have an opportunity to work in the allergy, neurology, rheumatology, cardiology and diabetic clinics. I have learned so much in such a short time and I love my job! I’m currently taking evening classes and hope to someday go to school to become a nurse. I am so thankful to PMI for my new career.
Kyle Aaron Schaefer
Lincoln Technical Institute
Denver, Colorado

Where do I begin? I initially attended Lincoln Tech to expand my knowledge on diesel trucks. I have learned from so many great teachers there. Not only did I learn, but the Career Services Department really works hard to place vets in good jobs. The knowledge I have gained has also helped me place in the Top 10 in the Colorado Top Tech competition. I will be competing in Top Tech again this year with the new skills that I have learned since last year.

My thirst for knowledge did not stop with the Diesel program. I am currently attending the Welding program as well. The reason for this is that diesel and welding go hand and hand with heavy equipment repairs. The teachers and the resources this school provides are invaluable. I still have so much to learn to become the best, and this school has really given me a leg up just as they said they would.
Richard Leach

Denver College of Nursing
Denver, Colorado

My experience at Denver College of Nursing was exceptional. DCN is an institution dedicated to higher learning and the success of its students. DCN makes every effort to ensure a positive, rewarding, and financially responsible experience for all Veterans. This is evident through their transparent financial aid process and participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

I believe that the right to choose an institution of higher learning and use hard-earned education benefits is of paramount importance and must not be jeopardized. As a Veteran, I believe that the right to choose an institution of higher learning cannot be taken away.
Jonathan Mundt

Pima Medical Institute
Colorado Springs, Colorado

My medical career started back in high school when I had the opportunity to become a Certified Nursing Assistant. After serving for 10 years in the army as an automated logistical specialist, I decided I wanted to get back into the medical field, so I found Pima Medical Institute and enrolled in their Medical Assistant program. After 6 weeks, I quit. Transitioning from the military to going back to school after having been out for so long was really tough for me.

One day I stopped back at the school and one of my instructors pulled me aside and encouraged me to come back. I decided to return and give it one more shot. I ended up loving the hands on training in the classroom. Heading into a new job as an MA, I felt ready and prepared thanks to my instructors.

After graduating, I decided I wanted to continue my education. I had a family to support and needed to work full-time, and PMI’s online program allowed me to do both. Balancing work, family and classes was a struggle, but it was definitely worth it. I found my classes to be applicable to my job as an MA and I am proud to say I recently completed my associate’s degree in Health Care Administration. I am currently the Test Management Manager over the Processing/Phlebotomy section and Main Lab at North Colorado Medical Center (NCMC) with Banner Health in Greeley Colorado. I am so grateful for PMI and the wonderful instructors I had. If it weren’t for them, I wouldn’t have come back to school and I wouldn’t have a career I love.
My name is Stevie “Cruz” Limas. I have been a student at IBMC College since November of 2017, and I am scheduled to graduate with an Associate’s degree in Business Administration and Accounting in June of 2019.

Since getting out of the military in March of 2017, I have had many experiences with work and school. I attended Retail Ready Career Center in Garland, TX and received my trade degree in HVAC. I have worked in the HVAC industry, but felt like I needed to add some additional skills so I decided to attend IBMC. I chose the field of Business Administration and Accounting to hopefully open my own business one day, and it is looking more and more promising every day.

I have received many skills since attending IBMC. I have gotten a lot better with typing, math, reading, writing, proof reading, and all in all better people skills. The school has taught me a lot about how to get a business up and running, as well as, how to keep it running. I am using my new marketing skills to bring new customers in, bookkeeping and keeping track of cash flow.

The school is very well organized and welcoming to say the least. They walked me through the process of e-benefits, and kept everything very simple for me in having to deal with the VA. The school recommended I apply for some grants, and helped me get the most out of my experience while in school. I was able to meet some amazing teachers and staff here, and would recommend every one of them to any veteran looking to build a career for themselves. All in all, IBMC College went above and beyond my expectations.
Richard Blackwell

Escoffier, School of Culinary Arts
Boulder, Colorado

Richard Blackwell started his culinary journey as a mess specialist in the U.S. Navy in 1986. After completing boot camp, he discovered his passion for cooking when he was assigned to work in the ship’s galley, cooking, cleaning and operating the kitchen and dining facilities.

He worked his way up to watch captain where his responsibilities included overseeing meal preparation for 1000 people.

During his 20-year career in the Navy, Richard gained diversified culinary experience working under different commands. During his time overseas, he worked as a baker making large batches of dinner rolls, cakes, cookies, breads and buns.

He also worked in a battalion using approximately 10 field stove kits to cook hot meals for the troops in the field.

After retiring from the Navy, he worked as the head cook at the Mission, a non-profit that serves meals to the homeless.

He also decided to go to school and completed a certificate in culinary arts from the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts. He graduated from Escoffier in August of 2018 with a 4.0 GPA and is considered a leader among his peers.

He is now enrolled in the culinary school’s Professional Pastry Arts program to challenge himself and expand his baking knowledge.

Most of all, Richard enjoys cooking and volunteering because he can focus his efforts and attention on making a positive impact on other people.
Terry Church

CollegeAmerica
Colorado Springs, Colorado

I would have to say that my experience while I have been enrolled at CollegeAmerica has been very good for sure. I know that all the staff are so willing to help you if you have any kind of problems and they are so welling to give you the tools you need to succeed in life. I know that if I had questions about my GI Bill® I could go and ask. If they didn’t know the answer, they would find the answer. I know that all the instructors are so willing to work with me if I didn’t understand something that is for sure. And I know with all their help I will be able to graduate with honor and I know if it was not for all the staff’s help I wouldn’t be as far as I am now that is for sure.
Christine Downing

Pima Medical Institute
Denver, Colorado

I had served 8 years as a medic in the military. After I got out, I knew I wanted to help people but I had been in combat and had seen enough blood, so I decided to become a Pharmacy Technician. I wasn’t sure I could go back to school at my age, but I visited Pima Medical Institute and my admissions advisors I met said, “You can do this!”

I had a good support system with friends and family, but I had lots of doubts about whether I could be successful. The program was fast paced, thorough, and enjoyable, because I got to use my mind again. I had people at PMI who believed in me and that made all the difference.

While I was still on my externship, I was invited to CVS for an interview. They told me the job would be fast paced and they would have a lot of expectations of me, and ultimately they hired me. I just love my job! I really enjoy the customer service part and dealing with people. Pima did a wonderful job preparing me to become a Pharmacy Technician and helping me find a job I love.
I am a retired military veteran. I spent 10 years in the Navy and 10 years in the Army. After retirement I decided to utilize my GI Bill® and go to school. After researching several schools I chose CollegeAmerica because it seemed like the right fit for me. Since the first day I walked in here all the staff members have treated me so well. They all explained the process in a way to make sure I personally understood how it all works. The instructors are extremely user friendly and give you the one on one attention that a student needs to succeed. And the classroom sizes are great! All of my GI Bill® benefits are in effect and I don’t have to worry about it! I look forward to earning my Associates Degree in Business/Accounting here at CollegeAmerica and move on to a Bachelor Degree. The course schedules are made for you to succeed. They are not overwhelming and can fit most people’s schedules.
My name is Travis Cox and I am currently attending Lincoln Tech located in East Windsor, CT. I have attended the school for just over 14 months and will graduate in May 2019.

I am a husband, father, and US Navy Veteran. I joined the Navy in 2010, deployed in 2012 and again in 2015-16 from Norfolk, VA. Both times to the Middle East in support of US ground forces, and for joint training operations with other countries. I was transferred to Groton, CT in 2016, and got out of the Navy at the end of 2017. Throughout my service, I had many different job assignments to include painting, rigging, and diesel mechanic.

After getting out, I bounced around from small job to small job not really going anywhere and drowning in bills. It got to the point I had to pull out my retirement fund from my time in service. After that, I started looking into schools and seeing what I could do for my education. Lincoln Tech popped up on my radar after some searching and replied to my inquiry within 10 minutes of pressing the send button.

I am a firm believer in “you reap what you sow”. That being said, I poured all I had into the school. As you can see, it has paid off. I have recently started a job with FedEx Freight making approximately $48,000 annually while working 40 hours a week. This opportunity would not have been possible without access to the GI Bill®, the support of my instructors, my friends, and most importantly my wife and son.

The GI Bill® has provided me the ability to make ends meet without having to work full time. I have also been able to create some memories with my family that are absolutely priceless. To keep on the train of positive notes, I will also be student loan free after graduation. This will set me one step closer to reaching my dream of owning my own performance garage.

The final thought I will leave you with is this. None, and I repeat, NONE of this would have been possible in the situation I was in without the GI Bill® Benefits.
My name is Roberto Diaz and I have been a CNC Machining and Manufacturing student for 7 months. I am a husband, father, and Marine Corps Veteran. I joined the Marine Corps in 2004 and I was finished up my duties in 2010. During my time in the Corps, I served in 0311 Infantry.

Once I got out of the Corps, I attended Tunxis Community College in Farmington, CT for 2 years. During this period, I had various jobs. At some point, I noticed that I was more interested in the trades and started to reconsider my path. In 2015, I landed a job at Turbines Control MRO, an overhaul and repair aviation facility, in Bloomfield, CT. After 4 years of working there, I decided that I wanted to advance my future in the machining industry, so I decided to attend Lincoln Tech in East Windsor, CT.

By attending Lincoln, I have been able to advance quite a bit in the last 7 months at my job. For example, I have been running heat case bushings on a CNC lathe. The program has allowed me to understand the industry a lot better in terms of comprehending programming and blueprints. Because of this knowledge and my experience, I have actually gotten job offers from companies like Electric Boat, Pratt and Whitney, but I want to complete the program before making the commitment to a career path at a specific company.

The GI Bill® has given me the chance to make my career path possible and provided me with the ability to support my family. Furthermore, none of this would be possible without my training at Lincoln Tech. The staff and the program have been great and the school should be proud of the work they do in helping Veterans pursue a career after their military service.
Zachary Morse
Lincoln Technical Institute
East Windsor, Connecticut

My time so far at Lincoln Technical Institute has been incredibly beneficial. Learning an in-demand skilled trade has lessened my fear of not being able to get a good job to support myself, and not become part of the statistic of homeless veterans. The lessening of that fear has allowed me to focus more on studying and practicing welding. The Post-9/11 GI Bill® also provides an ability to focus on becoming a better welder without worrying about taking out a loan and/or getting a job to pay for school. The school's ability to help the students with job searches and resumes also helps to reassure that there is a very good chance that when I graduate, I will have a job.

The security I feel from the Post-9/11 GI Bill® has allowed me to flourish in my welding classes, allowing me to have one of the highest GPAs in the class. I truly believe that were it not for that security, I would not be doing as well as I am now. If I had to take out a loan to pay for school, or had to get a job to pay my way through school, it would most certainly take away from my ability to focus wholly on welding and becoming a better welder.
My name is William Shivell and I am a veteran of the United States Air Force. I entered the Air Force in June 1970 and was discharged in August 1977. I had been working for the Department of Veteran’s Affairs at the Veteran’s Hospital for the past 7 years, but did not have a steady career. I decided I wanted to pursue a career in the healthcare field to secure a position where I am able to grow and continue helping people who are sick or injured. I enrolled in the Medical Assisting Evening Program at Lincoln Tech in June 2017, and successfully completed the program in October 2018. While attending my classes, I learned how to take a complete set of vital signs, how to draw blood, set up a patient for an electrocardiogram test, and how to perform CPR. When I began the program, I was very nervous. I had not been in school for a very long time. My classmates were very supportive of my drive to continue my education and we formed study groups to help each other with homework and assignments that prepared us for exams. I was given the opportunity to complete my externship with Trinity Healthcare through St. Francis Hospital’s Center for Diabetes and Metabolic care, where I was able to practice the administrative and clinical skills I developed on actual patients. I successfully completed the Medical Assisting Program with a 3.89 GPA and an attendance rate of 99%.
Dusty B. Ray
Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Orlando, Florida

Dusty is the 2018 Aviation Institute of Maintenance Orlando Student of the Year. Amazed, humbled and surprised, Dusty says that this award is important because "it propagates the will to go beyond the standard. Not just for me, but for anyone aspiring to be an A&P (Airframe & Powerplant) mechanic through AIM." The most rewarding part he says is knowing that the instructors, student body and school staff, that he respects so much, recognized his hard work. Motivated by his fellow aircraft maintainers in the military and his family to pursue becoming an A&P mechanic, Dusty, a married father of 2 toddlers states, "I constantly had to remind myself that school and the part-time work, were temporary and the A&P license is permanent." Attaining his A&P license was always at the top of his list. He enjoys playing musical instruments, writing and recording music, competitive gaming, and camping with his family.

Dusty grew up in the small town of Baxley, GA and proudly served in the US military. He still serves in the Army Reserves. While deployed to Afghanistan he realized that becoming an Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT) was what he wanted to do. He stated, "My unit maintained a fleet of MEDEVAC aircraft that rendered first aid to wounded soldiers in the field and transported them to the infirmary. Knowing that the aircraft I maintained helped save lives gave me reason to become an AMT." Currently, he is an AMT with Constant Aviation in Sanford, FL.
Shelby Cox

Florida Technical College
Kissimmee, Florida

Before attending Florida Technical College, I was active duty in the United States Air Force. Now, I am currently serving in the reserves as a staff sergeant at the 920th Security Forces Squadron. I am enrolled in the Medical Billing and Coding program here at Florida Technical College. I have two beautiful girls that motivate and inspire me every day to not only do better for them, but for myself as well. Trying to juggle between my kids and school, and other responsibilities has been very challenging, but the wonderful professors made the process so much easier and less stressful. They have been very accommodating and truly supportive of everything, which has allowed me to exceed in the program and maintain a 4.00 GPA, during my entire time at this school. The various staff members at Florida Technical College that have worked with me on assorted obstacles have done so tirelessly and expertly. I would like to thank everyone at Florida Technical College for making my time here a rewarding and gratifying experience.
Joshua Howell

Fortis College
Orange Park, Florida

My name is Joshua and I am a 12 year veteran of the US Army. I deployed to Iraq for 27 total months and Afghanistan for 12 months. I worked in aircraft and ground logistics for my entire career. While there I attended educational programs for Early Childhood Education, World History, and Veterinary Science. After leaving the military I decided to continue my education in veterinary science to become a Veterinarian Technician. When I arrived back to Jacksonville I learned that the school I was applying for was in the process of shutting down and my application got denied due to this process.

Since my military work experience did not benefit me occupationally, I needed to find a school that would help me along the way. Therefore I decided to go to a trade school and learn to become a HVAC-R (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigerant) Technician and Electrician. Upon completing the courses and starting to pursue my career; I decided that this field was not something I wanted to do and that my passion was always to be in the medical field. That is when I found Fortis College where I am currently in the Dental Assistant program.

My experience with this college has been better than any of the other educational institutes I have attended. By the time of completion and starting of my new career, I will have a better understanding and the knowledge I need to provide for my son while also giving me the foundation allowing me to further my education as a Dental Hygienist.
In late 2010, Mark Diaz was driving home from his job as a contractor for the Army. He remembers feeling his knees creak as he pressed on the gas. He was only 23 years old. He’d already served four years of active duty with the Navy, where he’d been a 3M-certified fiber optic tech. When he got out, it seemed only natural to put those skills to use.

“I’d spent the last few years of my life learning these good, marketable skills,” recalls Mark. “I could have done that and made a good living for the rest of my life. But it was hard work — hard on the body — and I had this creative need.”

He remembered reading about Full Sail University in a book on game design his parents had given him when he was a 13-year-old kid programming text-based adventure games into his TI-83 calculator.

“I attended a Behind the Scenes Tour in March of 2011. From the moment I set foot on campus, I was convinced. I told myself I was going to come through the program like a hurricane. I was going to take the school by storm,” he says.

He enrolled in the Game Development bachelor’s program that same year, and he thrived — both before and after graduation. Now, he’s a gameplay programmer at id Software, where he’s worked on games like DOOM Eternal and DOOM VFR. Despite leaning into his desire to switch careers and pursue a degree in a creative industry, Mark says he owes much of his success to his military background.

“The military put me in the mindset that I could do difficult things and succeed,” he says. “It was a four-year commitment, and when you’re 18, that seems like a long time. But I came through it, and it taught me I could make long-term commitments and see them through. It really made me believe I can do anything.”
Jalynn Danielak-Revels

Fortis Institute
Penscola, Florida

My name is Jalynn and I am a mother, wife, nurse, educator, and most importantly I am a veteran of the United States Navy. Being a vet is like being indoctrinated into a special club. Vets are like a family. I would like to share the story of my transition from a sailor to a student and then into the person I am today.

We all have struggled in life whether you are a veteran or a civilian. My wanting to be part of something more lead me to Fortis’s Nursing program. I joined the Navy because I wanted more. I wanted to be part of something special, and I longed to serve my country. Once discharged from the service I felt like that piece of me was lost and I didn’t know what to do. As a veteran in a civilian world, I didn’t know which way to turn. My family was at the verge of homelessness and I knew that I had to make a change.

At Fortis, I felt like being a veteran mattered and like I was part of a family. I selected Fortis because I did not have the time to wait on a waiting list. My experience at Fortis was tough, but it was nursing school and I wouldn’t want a nurse taking care of my family that didn’t struggle. I always knew that I had the support of the staff members.

After graduation, I passed my boards on the first attempt and worked as an orthopedic nurse and trauma nurse. I continued my education after graduating Fortis earning my Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. I am currently pursuing my Doctorate of Nursing and I can proudly say that I am a part of the extraordinary team that gave me my life back after the military. My family is no longer on the verge of homelessness - I am a homeowner and no longer worry about bills. Fortis for me as a veteran was more than a school; it is a place that allowed me to see my true potential and a group of people that inspired me to be the person that I am today.
David Wenger

Rasmussen College
Tampa, Florida

David Wenger of Tampa, Florida, says he’s always wanted to be a nurse. It’s not surprising given his military background. This U.S. Air Force Reservist is currently a Special Operations Medic and was also a medic while on active duty, having served in the military now for 10 years.

Three years ago, Wenger says he decided it was time to make a career change and pursue his dream of becoming a nurse. He knew it would not be easy, especially with his reservist obligations.

“I wanted to find a college that would allow me to jump right into my nursing courses and graduate quickly,” Wenger said. “I also wanted an institution that would recognize my military training.”

Wenger says his friends went to Rasmussen College—some were also current or prior military and had heard the College gave credit to military medics. As a medic, Wenger is well trained and says he felt prepared for nursing school. Unlike other colleges he considered, Rasmussen College took his military training and applied it toward his degree. He was also able to start his nursing courses right away without having any prerequisites.

Rasmussen College was also understanding of his military responsibilities. “Rasmussen gave me the flexibility I needed to maintain my EMT certification by attending necessary trainings as well as my drill weekends and annual trainings.”

Wenger graduated from Rasmussen College with his Associate’s degree in Nursing in March 2018. He is now working as a nurse in the ICU at AdventHealth Tampa. Wenger says he appreciates the support his instructors and staff provided during his time at Rasmussen College, and he encourages other veterans to pursue their career dreams.
Claudio Gonzalez

Full Sail University
Winter Park, Florida

As both a Marine Corps veteran and a graduate of Full Sail’s Computer Animation degree program, Claudio Gonzalez is no stranger to hard work and dedication. Having taken on a variety of roles within the entertainment industry, Claudio was recently recognized by the Orlando Business Journal as one of 2018’s Veterans of Influence for both his career accomplishments and his military service.

Following encouragement from his wife to pursue his dream of a career in digital animation, Claudio enrolled in Full Sail’s Computer Animation program, and was named Valedictorian of his graduating class. He was then hired by visual effects studio Digital Domain, where he worked as a digital artist and, later, a lead compositor on films like Transformers: Dark of the Moon and Smurfs 3D. He would be promoted again to lead digital painter where he worked on titles like The Watch, Silver Linings Playbook, and Ender’s Game.

It was a friend who suggested that Claudio pursue a role at Falcon’s Creative Group, an Orlando-based company that specializes in immersive, experiential design for theme parks. Upon starting at Falcon’s as a lead compositor/generalist, he knew there was work to be done. “When I came down here, the media side wasn’t built out yet, so I was bringing a lot of experience from the CG animated side and what it took to build that.”

It wasn’t long before his coworkers took notice of his hard work, and they nominated him to be recognized to be on Orlando Business Journal’s annual list of Veterans of Influence. Always the team player, Claudio still credits his team members for much of his success.

“It’s not just me,” he says. “There’s definitely a team effort. It’s bringing the right people together, creating the right culture at the studio that everybody works together as a team.”

This team-first approach is something Claudio says has been a part of him since his military days.

“If you get people together and pick everybody’s brain to polish something and improve it, then you’re gonna get the best results.”
My name is Josh Browder and I am Veteran. I have served the World’s Finest Navy for 12 years, eight of which were attached to the United States Marine Corps and their Corpsman. Trained in Tactical Combat Casualty Care, I deployed to Afghanistan with the Marines providing tactical first response on the front lines. In the Civilian World I was an EMT prior to applying at Fortis. To be perfectly honest, the decision to become a scrub tech is not a tale of passion. The initial choice to pursue a career change was monetary for me. EMT’s make very little and I had a family to feed.

As a Vet tech right after high school I had acquired several skills, from venipuncture, radiology, and, anesthesia, to surgery and pharmacology. Working in sterile processing at the UGA Vet Teaching Hospital I learned more about cleaning, sterilizing and packing instruments. The answer was obvious. By learning to be a Surgical Technologist I could continue to serve and help people in the medical field, using skills I already had a foundation in, and make a better future for my family. So I researched the local programs to find the best fit. This led me to Fortis.

In the summer of 2013 Fortis College was the only college that offered an Associate’s Degree in Surgical Technology. In addition, Fortis had 96% job placement in the Jacksonville market. I had an Associate’s degree already and so my core classes were out of the way. Though I already had a foothold and experience in the medical field this was a lot of information being passed to me. I found it to be a welcomed challenge. I couldn’t get enough knowledge in the classroom. That changed once I got to the field. That’s when I realized there was no possible way for me to learn it all in a classroom. Fortis taught me the concepts and gave me the base for which I needed to excel in my new chosen profession. I graduated in July of 2015 with an Associate’s degree in Surgical Technology and held the title of Certified Surgical Tech. I went on to work in the Main OR at Memorial Hospital of Jacksonville a mere two weeks later. I was asked on week one how I felt about Robotic surgery and I was excited to learn whatever they would teach me. Less than a year later I became the Robotic Surgery Coordinator and have since transferred to Savannah, Georgia to build, train, and create a Robotic Center of Excellence.

I love my job and I learn something new almost every day. Thanks to Fortis I now have a skill set that will carry me into the future.
Theresa Norris

Pensacola School of Massage Therapy & Health Careers
Pensacola, Florida

Pensacola School of Massage Therapy & Health Careers had all the things I was looking for in a school, plus a staff that was interested in the assistance and development of its students. The people that I went to class with and the people who instructed us made every minute worth it.

Being able to use my benefits helped with the burden of student loans. I’m not sure if I still would have been able to go if I didn’t have them.

I love the people I work with every day.

PSMTHC taught me so much. I never would have been able to do this job without the education I got at PSMTHC.
I served in the Army for 17 years and was medically retired in 2014 after receiving injuries while serving in Iraq. The military was my life. It was all I knew and now I was expected to start over. Between 2014 and 2017 I tried to learn to cope with life as a disabled veteran in a civilian world. In 2017 I decided to stop feeling sorry for myself. I picked myself up off the floor and walked into Fortis Institute. For the first couple of weeks I really didn’t think I would make it a year. I felt too old to start over and get an education in something as technical as the HVAC-R industry. My instructors encouraged me everyday. They also demonstrated loyalty, duty, respect, honor, integrity and personal courage.

Fortis gave me a new beginning and a new start at life.
Dedra Boyd

Florida Technical College
Cutler Bay, Florida

My name is Dedra Boyd. I am originally from Long Island, New York. I am a NAVET and rejoined the Navy in 2001 out of Virginia Beach, Virginia. My first tour I was in engineering and then re-enlisted 5 years later to serve as a Hospital Corpsman (medic) with a specialty in mental health. I recently retired from the U.S. Navy and moved with my family to Miami, Florida in October 2017. Soon after my retirement, I had completed my bachelor’s degree in psychology and wanted to quickly find employment working in the medical field again. The discontinuance of helping others brought me back to school here at Florida Technical College (FTC) to obtain my certification as a Medical Assistant.

My time here at FTC has been a great experience thus far. The process of enrolling as a veteran was seamless and any question I had was quickly answered by the staff and the military veteran representative. I am currently taking the “blended” course to allow me to reach my goal of getting the diploma, in addition taking care of my other responsibilities. The instructors are very knowledgeable and accessible. FTC allows me to share my experiences from being in the military with my classmates as we learn each topic. My days spent on campus allow me to learn new things from them and refresh what I have previously learned from my past training.
Jessica Fornett graduated with her Pharmacy Technician diploma in October 2017 from Fortis College in Cutler Bay, Florida and is currently working for a large pharmacy chain. She plans to pursue her degree to become a Pharmacist and having graduated with academic honors from Fortis she is capable of making that dream a reality. Jessica has spent her life working to make her dreams come true. She was raised by her grandmother who taught her independence and self-awareness as well as the importance of education as a means to be successful in life.

Jessica joined the R.O.T.C. while in high school in support of her dream to later serve in the U.S. military. She made that dream a reality when she joined the U.S. Navy right out of high school in 2008. While her inspiration in life is her grandmother, role models in her small town of Pascagoula, Mississippi were difficult to find. She learned to be her own role model and now serves as one for others including her three sons. In the Navy she served as an Information Technology Systems Technician in Communications. She originally wanted to serve as a Navy Corpman because of her lifelong interest in the medical field, but at the time those roles were difficult for women to secure, so she adapted and served where she was needed. Her time in the Navy was spent on the USS Wasp in Norfolk, Virginia.
Terany Goldsby  

Pensacola School of Massage Therapy & Health Careers  
Pensacola, Florida

I chose Pensacola School of Massage Therapy & Health Careers because I heard really great reviews about it from former students. I chose the massage therapy program because I wanted to make a difference in my community and help assist those who suffer from injuries and mental health through massage therapy.

I love that it fit into my work schedule. PSMTHC was the only school that offered night classes. The information was retainable and the instructors were very thorough in their teachings.

Being able to use my Veterans benefits was a blessing! I would have never been able to pursue my passion without it!

My job is wonderful! I love the flexibility and the many opportunities that are available to me.

The education from PSMTHC helped me to land the job that I wanted anywhere! I have been able to heal hundreds of clients through massage all with the help of the training I received from Pensacola School of Massage and Health Careers.
Miguel Phillipe Bonilla-Roman
Florida Technical College
Kissimmee, Florida

My name is Miguel Phillipe Bonilla-Ramos and I served the US Navy. After the military, I made the decision to pursue a trade in facilities and custodial services. That became my starting point. Four years later, an opportunity opened as a maintenance assistant manager at Valencia College, but I was not considered for the interview since I did not have the knowledge required on any facility trade (HVAC, Electrical, Plumbing) at the time. That was when I decided to pursue the HVAC with PLC program at Florida Technical College. After graduation, I was promoted as Facility Assistant Director at the University of West Georgia. Thanks to the support from the faculty at Florida Technical College, I was able to graduate with a 4.0 GPA. They changed my life!
Aubry and David were both in the USMC. While serving, Aubrey was a heavy equipment mechanic and David was a amphibious assault vehicle mechanic. After the Marines, Aubrey became a stay at home mom while David continued as a diesel mechanic for Air Products and Chemicals. Air Products closed down operations at the local facility and we decided it was time for a career change. It was through yoga that Aubrey learned of massage therapy and after her enrollment in the program it did not take long for David to enroll as well.

The friendly atmosphere, knowledge of the admissions staff and the ease of enrollment was why we chose Fortis.

Our experience at Fortis was AMAZING. We both truly feel that the instructors and staff cared about us not only as students but as individuals starting a new career and pushed us to succeed.

Since graduating from Fortis, we have been able to further our education in Massage Therapy by choosing a specialization in Prenatal Massage and now own and operate the only Prenatal Massage clinic on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Now we get to go to work every morning doing something that we really love and we get to set our own schedule so it allows us to spend more quality time with our children.
William Ramsey is a Disabled Air Force Veteran who served from 1996-2014. He was born and raised in Kentucky, he now resides in Deltona, Florida. William enrolled in the HVACR program in 2015 was on the President’s List the entire time in the program. He graduated top in his class and worked in the field as an HVACR technician. William decided to come back to FTC in 2018 and enrolled in the Electrical program at night while he was working as a HVACR tech during the day.

William graduated the electrical program in December 2018 and again was top in his class. His studies and work experience have taken him full circle and brought him back to FTC as an adjunct instructor in the HVACR program. This is his first class that he has taught and I have received nothing but positive comments from his students about his knowledge and teaching approach. We are very happy having him here at FTC and expect positive outcomes from his students.
My educational experience at City College – Ft Lauderdale was amazing. When leaving the military I had a plan to pursue my education via my GI Bill®, and had my aim set for majoring in Surgical Technology. This school was a great choice not only because it was one of the few schools in the area that had my major, but the small class sizes made you have a more personal relationship with the staff. Unlike major universities with multiple buildings and a large campus, City College has everything encompassed in one building, making it easy to navigate around. It was never a hassle at this school with finding staff help, and I never had to search high and low to ultimately be given the run around unlike at my first university.

The staff at this campus was exceptional, and was knowledgeable in their field. My instructors for my major were easy to reach, and used their experience in the field as reference to many of the lessons. They surely do set the students up for success here and do not leave you to fend for yourself, and make sure you are progressing accordingly. Unlike other Surgical Technology programs, this is simply not a certification program, you leave with an associate’s degree which makes you more marketable and allows the opportunity for growth in the future.
After getting out of the United States Navy, I decided to follow my dreams of creating movie magic. I was working full time as a retail supervisor, which I was completely unhappy with, when I discovered Dave School. I started the process with full confidence of being able to pay for school without having to work during the experience due to the Post 9/11 bill. I started Dave School in March 2018 with a plan to complete my bachelor’s degree in Visual Effects Production. During my time in school, I did not have to work for extra income, so I was able to focus on the task at hand. I completed the on-ground training in 12 months and have continued attending online classes in pursuit of my BA. I have roughly a year left of online classes to finish my full process, but I know it is achievable since I’m still receiving benefits from the VA while in school. My ultimate goal is to start my own veteran owned company that involves combining visual effects with special make-up effects for films, television, and indie projects. None of this training would have been possible without the benefits I received through the VA after life in the military.
Harold Jennings

Fortis College
Orange Park, Florida

I couldn’t have achieved my dreams without Fortis College. The wonderful teachers who we depend on for training and guidance every single day. The person who proof reads our applications and prepares us for job interviews. The person who challenges us everyday to check in properly and put our best foot forward in internship. Even down to the director who teaches a class while dealing with personal situations in their own lives. The tireless devotion and dedication given to a simple little guy like myself to reach my potential in a professional field can never be appreciated with the proper words. Fortis has provided me with an opportunity, a path, a career, and that is so underestimated in today’s society. I vow to never forget how the librarian helped me convert a research paper from MacBook language to Hewlett Packard language. Let me tell you, it’s harder than you think everyone! I vow to never forget how everyone whispered your going to have trouble with this particular teacher and it turned out that this particular teacher was a direct influence on my certification exam being easy for me because they made me think instead of remembering. I do tend to get wordy, so I will simply end with this. I achieved my dream with help. Sometimes people can tend to get proud and not want to reach out for help. Any successful person in their story, if you pay attention, has someone to thank. Unless you are hitting the Florida lottery, and yes I just bought my ticket. (Jesus knows my struggles), outside of that, someone somewhere helped you get to where you are. Babysitters, mothers, fathers, coworkers giving you a ride to an interview, someone has helped you along the way. I contribute everything to my wife and the wonderful people of Fortis College. Fortis, I have a question for you. Where would I be without you? Thank you and god bless each and everyone of you.
When I first joined the Navy in November 2014, I thought that the military was going to be my career for the next twenty to thirty years. It never crossed my mind that I would want to leave at any point. I’ve been on deployment and visited countries that I never imagined visiting. I’ve met unbelievably great people throughout my Navy career. I also had the most incredible leadership. What I once thought were qualities of a leader were exceed with my chain of command. In 2016, I gave birth to a baby girl and little did I know my feelings of making this a long-life career were soon going to change. I grew so attached and so in love with my daughter that I couldn’t imagine going on another deployment just to be away from her and miss major milestones.

On April 24, 2017, I was officially discharged from the Navy and was set to move back to my home in Miami, Florida. I quickly got an amazing job opportunity at Memorial Hospital South in Hollywood, FL. While working full time and trying to find my place in the civilian world, I just wasn’t happy. There was no room for growth outside of my position and I really couldn’t afford to live off of what I was making at the time.

I wasn’t having any luck finding a well-paying job seeing as most of the requirements were years of experience or needed a bachelor’s degree. Both of which I did not have at the time. I had an extremely motivating conversation with my manager and she pushed me to go back to school. It’s a temporary sacrifice that will benefit my family and I in the long run. I found Cambridge College. Everyone was so helpful and is still helpful. They answered all of my questions and helped me in any way that they could. It is an accelerated program so it’s a bit fast paced but I’m catching on quite quickly and I’m loving every step of the way. Being with my classmates since the beginning has caused us to feel like family. We are super close and help each other with anything that we might not understand. I think that’s what makes this experience even better. I have never met a group like the one I am with. I’m excited for what’s ahead and can’t wait for graduation!
Karla Diaz

Fortis College
Miami, Florida

Karla Diaz completed her diploma as a Pharmacy Technician from Fortis College in February 2019. She was hired by the site where she completed her externship, working as a Pharmacy Technician for a local pharmacy. She previously completed educational programs in Medical Assisting and Phlebotomy making her a well-rounded healthcare advocate.

Karla was born in Nicaragua, but came to the U.S. at an early age. She dreamed of joining the military right out of high school, but that dream was deferred when she became a mom at the age of 17 and got caught up in a personal nightmare of domestic violence. She knew when to seek help to remove herself and her child from that situation and eventually realized her dream when she joined the U.S. Army and served six years from 2006-2012. She did tours in Iraq and Korea and came away with experiences that impacted her life significantly.

Karla is a survivor in every sense of the word having battled her way out of domestic violence, continues to work through reoccurring PTSD and is raising a child with autism. She finds strength in serving others through her work with Mission Continues and the Wounded Warrior Project. Karla notes that her community service has helped her work her way through life’s challenges and reconnect with her children and civilian life. Karla gives credit to her parents for their love and support and special recognition to her mother as her biggest advocate and motivation.
My name is Brian Privett, and I served in the United States Air Force from 2006-2014. I finished my career in the Air Force as a Staff Sergeant and was separated due to the downsizing of the military from 2013-2016. I moved back home and found a job working at a local college as a maintenance technician. After a few months working there, I felt I needed more of a challenge and a more purposeful career. So, I began to research careers, and after some time I found Radiation Therapy at Cambridge.

I was able to get all the information I needed about the program from the admissions representatives, and they were very helpful in guiding me in the direction I needed to go in order to get into the program. Because of my service I had questions about funding for the school but the financial aid department was very helpful and got everything set up for me through the Post-9/11 GI Bill®. Once I started classes, all my teachers were extremely knowledgeable and made sure that all the material was understood before moving on. The program director and clinical coordinator were very attentive to the needs of all the students. Finally, the career advisor made sure we were ready for our job search and interviews upon graduation.

What I liked most about this program was that the staff gave you the tools and knowledge to be successful. Success is earned and not given.
Matthew Nicholson

Rasmussen College
Tampa, Florida

When Matthew Nicholson graduated high school in 2003 he was compelled to join the United States Army. He threw himself into his role as a combat medic, providing first aid and frontline care to those injured on the battlefield.

Nicholson always thought about going to physician’s assistant school to continue his work of helping people once he returned to the civilian world. However, after finishing his military contract and doing more research he found a role as a PA would not be as flexible as he hoped. “I wanted the ability to travel and potentially work for a nonprofit overseas,” he said. By contrast, pursuing a nursing career seemed to be the perfect fit.

In 2017 Nicholson decided to pursue his Professional Nursing Associate’s degree at Rasmussen College as the College recognized his military training and gave him credit. “After doing my research, [I found that] Rasmussen College provided the flexibility I knew I needed. The nursing courses fit around my busy work schedule,” he said. Like many students, Nicholson has a lot to juggle. “My professors are straightforward and they understand that the majority of us are adult students; we have lives outside of school and bring previous work and life experiences to the table,” he said.

For Nicholson, the best part of his college experience has been the connection he has made with the other veterans in his courses. “There are quite a few vets in my program and we just have that instant bond and mutual understanding,” he said.
Anthony Meredith

Dave School
Orlando, Florida

My name is Anthony Meredith. I’m from Orlando Florida and I am a Veteran of the United States Army. I joined the Army on June 14th, 2011 and served for seven years. I completed two combat tours to the middle east in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. On my second deployment I was injured and as a result I was medically retired in October of 2018.

When I got out of the Army, I wanted to pursue an education, specifically I wanted to pursue an education in visual effects. I enrolled in The DAVE School and began my education in the VFX production program. Throughout my time at The DAVE school I learned the core fundamentals of digital animation and visual effects. I was challenged daily and definitely had to put in a lot of extra hours to include a lot of my weekends. In the end it was all worth it and I graduated in 2019.

My experience at The DAVE School was incredible and a learned more than I could ever imagine. Upon graduation from the visual effects diploma program I have already receive a number of job opportunities. I have not excepted any yet because I am continuing my education at the DAVE School and pursing my bachelor’s degree.
My name is Nakisha Shukur and I served in the US Army. One of the best educational decisions that I have ever made was to transfer and enroll at Florida Technical College, Pembroke Pines campus. In February 2018, I started to complete my bachelor’s degree in Allied Healthcare Management and I will complete it in December 2019. FTC offers every student the opportunity to enhance their leadership and interpersonal skills, that will contribute towards a chosen discipline. The school offers multiple programs such as Work Study, Student Ambassador, Tutor and Volunteer services and has an open door policy for students to address any professional and personal concerns. My experience as a student at Florida Technical College has been exceptional. I can never express my gratitude towards the entire FTC faculty and staff for their outstanding and exceptional leadership, professionalism, dedication and caring approach.
Born in California, raised in Hawaii, I am currently a student in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program at Cambridge College Delray Beach campus. Six months before completion of my active duty service in the United States Marine Corps, I knew I needed to get myself enrolled in college, but didn’t know where to begin. I applied to many schools throughout the country; however, something about Cambridge College stuck out to me. The administration office was quick to answer all questions, military friendly, and guided me in the right direction. They explained the importance of accreditation, and all the modalities I would be exposed to throughout the program. There also wasn’t a year to two year wait list to start this program. The enrollment, acceptance, and school start date was within months. Since being in the program, I’ve had excellent teachers who put in the time and work necessary to help a student succeed. I’ve also been exposed to two different clinical rotations at well-known hospitals that have helped give me that real-world, hands-on experience which has assisted in broadening my knowledge in the field.
Keosha Gulley

Fortis Institute
Pensacola, Florida

I was an Aviation Machinist’s Mate in the US Navy. After getting out of the Navy I tried to work jobs here and there that ended up just being dead ends. I eventually lost my job and my apartment and my husband and children and I moved in with my sister back home in Pensacola. I had always wanted to be a nurse but never knew what path to take to get there.

I chose Fortis because they had outstanding reviews and the highest NCLEX pass rate in Pensacola among all the universities. I also wanted a program that would challenge me and Fortis definitely provided that for me.

My experience with Fortis was unsurpassed by any other college I have ever attended. My deans, my teachers, my career advisor all pushed me to be where I am today. When you’re a student it doesn’t click on why they are doing what they are doing and why it seems like it is so much harder than you expected it to be. But to be honest, if it weren’t, I would not be the nurse I am today.

I am currently a labor and delivery registered nurse at Sacred Heart Hospital. I am absolutely in love with my career and my job.

Fortis allowed me the ability to help my husband take care of our growing family. We were able to purchase our first home and I was able to help my husband start his own business. Fortis gave me a life and a career that not only am I proud of, but that I enjoy doing every single day.
After serving twenty-two years in the military and thirteen years overseas with The Department of State Diplomatic Security Services, I found myself seeking a different life challenge.

I pondered upon the fact that I had already obtained a private pilot license, but it would behoove me to pursue my Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) license. The institution of choice was none other than Aviation Institute of Maintenance.

On March 12, 2017, my twenty-one month journey began towards obtaining my A&P license. I was very ecstatic and determined. My first three blocks allowed me to become a candidate for Honor Roll and perfect attendance while achieving academic excellence.

As I continued to maintain a 4.0 grade point average, I became a member of the student body council and volunteered for numerous community outreach activities such as Sock-tober Fest, Toys for Tots, car shows and also participating as a volunteer in numerous graduation ceremonies, just to name a few.

Mentorship also played a key role in my studies at AIM, as I succeeded in providing numerous classmates hands on assistance in order for them to achieve a passing score on their Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) written exams and Oral and Practical License.

During my tenure at AIM, I maintained a 4.0 GPA and earned fourteen Directors, two Honor Roll, and sixteen Perfect Attendance awards for outstanding academic achievement.

Rounding out the success of my hard work, I am happily graduating Summa Cum Laude with a 4.0 GPA! I will now be starting my aviation career at Endeavor Air and can’t wait to see what the future holds!
Malcolm Madison

Fortis Institute
Smyrna, Georgia

My life before the military was not an easy one and life after the military wasn’t an easy transition either. It came with many ups and downs, trials, and tribulations, many of which I was not prepared for. Which ended up with me being homeless and having to start over and find my way, again. Fortis College was that start for me and now I’m almost at the end of the road. Within my time here at Fortis I have earned an AOS in Dental Assisting, Expanded Function Certification, and at the end of the year I will be earning my second AOS in Dental Hygiene. From homelessness to hygiene, that’s what Fortis College and Technical Colleges do for young black veterans like me. They give us a chance to start over, after the military has given us a start.
After only five short years in the US Navy Seabees my time in service came to an abrupt end. I found myself searching for my place in this world. With my wife and four children in tow, I worked different construction jobs trying to replace the income we had grown accustomed to. Of course that was almost impossible. It was by pure happenstance that I came across Heavy Equipment Operations School of America. I excelled in my classes and found myself employed within 3 months post graduation. I am now earning six figures and able to provide for my family with no concerns and no added debt hanging over my head. This is all due to the grace of God and my short time between start and completion at the school. If I had gone to a regular university I can tell you I would not be where I am now. I am truly grateful to the school and those there that helped me gain access to this incredible life we have now. Eternally grateful!
Melvin Buford
Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Dacula, Georgia

Aviation Institute of Maintenance-Atlanta had given me the wonderful opportunity to improve my skills and knowledge in my pursuit of aircraft maintenance. The reason why I chose AIM was due to their convenient location to the world’s busiest airport and their flexibility to work with a student’s busy schedule. The instructors’ knowledge and experience in the industry is what helped me choose AIM.

After graduating with a 4.0 GPA, it gave me the opportunity to pursue an avionics technician position in Athens, Georgia. I learned to work on a Piper Malibu Mirage, Cessna 172, Beechcraft King Air, Beechcraft Bonanza, Beechcraft Muskateer, Beechcraft Baron 58, and a LanceAir Columbia 400. All those opportunities have landed my dream job and company at Delta Airlines as an avionics technician in the instrument shop. I wouldn’t have done it without AIM’s help.

Michael Wyatt
Fortis College
Smyrna, Georgia

As an Air Force veteran, the assistance I receive for school has been instrumental in furthering my future. My wife and I moved to Georgia on 3 days’ notice. She is retired Air Force and immediately took the chance to sign up for the dental program here at Fortis College. Working a dead end construction job, and not wanting to continue a career in Law Enforcement, I decided to look into my options at Fortis too. The VA benefits I received allowed me to not only begin a new career that I love and allows me to help people and change lives, but I have also had one of the best experiences I could ask for with Fortis, and the amazing EMS staff. The energy and knowledge they bring into the program makes learning easy and enjoyable.
When I first called to acquire information about the school, I was treated with respect, and all my questions were answered in an orderly fashion. The professionalism from the staff made it very easy to understand direction, and what procedures to follow to get enrolled. When I arrived at the facility, I was greeted by the staff at the front desk, with warmth, a caring tone, and with a smile. As I waited for my appointment time to come with financial aid, I enjoyed conversation with other incoming students. When it was my time to go in with my Financial Aid Advisor, it was prompt, and on time. My advisor was very professional at all times, even knowing how difficult their jobs can become, she actually went through the paperwork with a breeze, and I was on my way out the door. The very first day of class was very informative, as we gained what we would need to excel in the course. My instructors were always patient, and are the very best at what they do. They ensure that the information we needed to learn, and to be ready for the career we have chosen was implemented in the lectures, and study. So I would have to say that this is a great school if you desire a small setting, hands on, and just great faculty to learn from, come to Fortis College.
My name is Sacha and I served in the United States Army as a 12N (Horizontal Construction Engineer) from 2012 to 2015. I completed basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and then went to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for my AIT training. My first duty station was Fort Steward, Georgia and shortly after I started training and prepping for deployment to Afghanistan. In 2013, I deployed to Afghanistan and spent 5 months at FOB shank where I conducted Force Protection in joint with the local nationals. After I got out of military, I was unsure of what I wanted to do. I wanted to put my G.I Bill to use and go to college, but I was not too sure where or what to do. I wanted to be a nurse for a long time but I knew it was extremely hard to get into nursing school and overall, a hard program to succeed in. I was fortunate to find Carrington in Boise where they had a LPN program that bridged to a RN program. I tested and got in within just a few months and before I knew it, I became a nurse. I never thought I would be able to accomplish all that I have but thanks to Carrington, my dream job became a reality.
I was quickly approaching the end of my military career and completed a personality profile during my transition assistance program. That test linked me with Stevens-Henager and the Respiratory Therapy program.

The administration team assisted me with class scheduling to match my schedule and complete the courses that I needed to enter the program and stay on course to finish within the timeframe. The program is accelerated and provides the type of instruction that was very easy to adjust to, it even reminded me of accelerated military education training I went through at times.

In the Respiratory Therapy program, there are several courses that allow hands on learning and the program staff prepared me for the clinical application of the skills learned. The clinical rotations were proof that my education and skills were on point. It also allowed for prospective employers to evaluate who I was as an individual and measure my knowledge and skills within the field. Those situations became a lengthy interview in many ways. It was a very educational and fulfilling program.

Upon the completion of the program, I was offered two opportunities within Respiratory Care. I am very excited to be entering the medical field in my area of study. I could not have done this without the assistance and education that Stevens-Henager and the Respiratory Therapy team provided me. They are a great fit for transitioning military personnel. I am proud to say that I am a Stevens-Henager Alumni.
Karl Genwright

Lincoln Technical Institute
Melrose Park, Illinois

Before Lincoln Tech I was working at a landfill in Port Wentworth, Georgia. During this time, I worked with heavy equipment machinery where I took dirt and covered industrial trash, which is similar to what I did in the Army. I moved my family back to Chicago to find better opportunities. I decided to attend Lincoln Tech because I was overwhelmed with being stuck with the same task, and wanted to do something more exciting. I searched other trade schools, but Lincoln Tech had the best option for me. Not only was it very convenient as far as travel goes, but I am able to learn a trade and obtain my Associate Degree at the same time. Although it is a fast-paced environment, the instructors, faculty, and staff help the students achieve their goal of graduating. I learned not just how to complete a project or fix something that is broken, but I learned electrical theory. I learned that safety is a number one factor in this field. I also learned the correct terminology that I will be using in the field, as well as proper codes and standards. I am proud to be a part of the Lincoln Tech Family.

Allan Campos

Lincoln Technical Institute
Melrose Park, Illinois

I was interested in coming to Lincoln because of the hands-on training. I considered the EEST program and Automotive but decided to start the Automotive Technology program. I’ve gained a lot of knowledge about different ways to repair cars and expanded my knowledge of being an automotive technician. People call auto techs “grease monkeys”, but I learned there’s a lot more to it than that. I have been working at a dealership for 6 months now, thanks to my training at Lincoln, and I’m excited to start my career in the field when I graduate in August.
Once I got out of the Navy after six years of being an Electrician’s Mate, I didn’t really know what I wanted to do. I decided to look into technical programs at surrounding schools and even toured a few. However, I did not receive a warmer welcome than from the Lincoln Tech. The admissions representative answered all of my questions and made the whole process quick and painless. I went from not knowing what I wanted to do, to starting school within a month of my tour. From the first day of class I knew that I had made a great decision. The instructors are extremely knowledgeable and are eager to share that knowledge with the students. Their enthusiasm and wisdom made every experience a moment I learned from. Lincoln Tech helped me master the basic skills I learned previously and taught me so much more than I could have anticipated. I have now graduated with an Associate Degree and have a great job that I love.
Shaun Fitzpatrick

Lincoln Technical Institute
Indianapolis, Indiana

I am a US Army veteran of 23 years. From my service, I have been declared 100% disabled. Besides physical ailments, I suffer from PSD and TBI. My PTSD makes it hard for me to be around groups of people. I must be closest to the door. Sometimes I can react defensively. Loud noises will often trigger my anxiety. My TBI has made reading difficult. I must read things 2-3 times just to retain the information. My short-term memory has been affected and I sometimes cannot come up with a word when talking.

I started school at Lincoln Tech’s Indianapolis campus in April of 2018. I was nervous and worried if I would be able to study and retain the information. I also didn’t know if people would understand my limitations due to my PTSD. Fortunately, Lincoln Tech instructors have been extremely understanding. Administration is in contact with the VA and keep my information on file, so I am allowed to leave the room if needed, can use notes on tests, and I am allowed extra time if needed. I was offered a tutor, but refused, because I am determined to do this on my own.

The younger students call me “Papaw” because I take them under my wing and try to teach them discipline and integrity. Many are now showing up on time because of me. They work harder in class and in the shop to improve their grades. I don’t let them make up excuses.

I have found purpose in my life again. No man wants to sit at home and feel useless. Lincoln Tech has increased my self-confidence and has given me a reason to get up in the morning. My PTSD and TBI are always going to be here, but Lincoln Tech has made my success possible.
Kevin Sabo

Fortis College
Indianapolis, Indiana

Kevin is a current HVAC student and 23-year US Army Veteran where he was promoted from infantry to Observer/Controller Mentor. While in the army, he specialized in helping units streamline their efficiency, and improve the overall quality of training. After leaving the Army, he was recommended by a friend to check out Fortis College’s HVAC program. Wanting to do something different, Kevin started researching the school and said that the school’s background and training was top-notch. The program has helped Kevin develop new skills that transfer into the civilian world, and he is looking to combine his people skills and technical knowledge into a position that enables him to pursue a successful career as an HVAC Technician.
Jay Knight
Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Indianapolis, Indiana

Late night, January 30, 2019, Jay Knight and his family awoke to smoke and flames in their home. Jay and his wife, their daughter and her fiancé and his granddaughter all escaped safely. But their home burned to the ground. They ended up with not much more than the clothes they were wearing.

Jay Knight is currently an AMT student here at our campus now in his 16th block. When this terrible accident happened, he was in Block 15. Jay came to class the next day after the fire. Jay was also very ill at this time. He missed only 3 days – NOT because of the house fire – he missed those days due to his illness.

Upon his return to class, he inquired about taking a “Leave of Absence” with the thought of taking some “time to recover and recuperate.” BUT he decided not to as he was able to stay on track by staying on campus during non-school hours and worked hard over the weekends. He explained that his motivation was earning his A&P license and not slowing down his progress and momentum of completing his education for his future. That’s why he wasn’t going let this devastating experience change his future plan of being an A&P certified aircraft mechanic. This spotlight on Jay is to acknowledge his determination and dedication to his education and future for himself and his family. He’s one of our many career and goal-focused students and many graduates here at the Indianapolis AIM campus.
Zachery Morphew
Lincoln Technical Institute
Indianapolis, Indiana

Being a United States Marine gives me great pride, and I know others who have served feel the same way. One thing I pay very close attention to is the way our veterans are treated, both in the school and in our day-to-day lives. When I attended other schools in the past, there wasn’t much support for veterans. It was as if they were more worried about getting the money from the GI Bill® than they were about my well-being. Being a veteran I know the transition from military to civilian life can be hard. Here at Lincoln Tech, we strive to show our veterans the utmost respect and do everything we can to accommodate their time here. Personally, I have been through the transition and understand that sometimes you just need someone to talk to. I keep my door open to any of my veteran students who need to stay after and talk things out, no matter what the circumstances are, I’m always here to help.
Adrian Miles

Fortis College
Indianapolis, Indiana

Adrian came to Fortis College’s HVAC program after a 22 year career in the US Army, where he served as an intelligence analyst. After leaving the US Army, Adrian was ready for a more active position and lifestyle. “I used to sit behind a desk, and I wanted to become an action-guy and work with my hands”. Having multiple family members that were in the HVAC industry, Adrian quickly discovered the perks and benefits that were offered by the field, and decided it was his chosen path. “It (the school) is five minutes from my house. I wanted a short program, so it was the perfect amount of time.” Currently Adrian plans on working for his family business after completing his training at Fortis College Indianapolis, and he is looking to carry that business far into the future.
Len Ward
Fortis College
Indianapolis, Indiana

I always wanted to do something with mechanics. I love working with my hands, and I get a lot of satisfaction fixing things. When I got done with active duty, I missed fixing things. I didn’t want to lose the enjoyment of working on equipment. My counselor and a couple of other veterans suggested HVAC.

I am looking to focus on commercial mechanics because I can figure out what the problem is, go, and fix it. I like to be my own boss, and not have anyone looking over my shoulder. After I got out of the Army, I knew that I did not want to go to a four-year school. I wanted a fast-paced program so I looked up Fortis College, and after applying got a call, and scheduled my first meeting. I started looking up the college, and saw that it was fast paced, and interesting. I came in, toured, and after my last two week drill, I signed up. I was very happy with the admissions experience because they weren’t trying to enroll me just for the money. They wanted to know who I was, why I was coming to school, and what my plans were for after graduating. They seemed like they were trying to help me get a career, not just enroll me. It’s been a good experience since.
Kissie Leavell
Bellus Academy
Manhattan, Kansas

My name is Kissie Leavell and I started school in 2009. I was initially enrolled in the cosmetology program and due to my experience at Bellus Academy I decided to expand my skill set and also attend the Massage Therapy program. It was a great decision and it helped me reach my career goals.

I was fortunate to have the Voc-Rehab program through the VA hospital help support my tuition due to my service in the military.

My dream job was to be able to have the skills and training to open my own salon and be a business owner. All of my instructors at Bellus Academy were extremely helpful and supportive of my career goals and my experience is something I will remember forever.

My education was supported by knowledgeable instructors that showed me step-by-step how to address the various modalities and procedures during my training. I wanted to share a huge thanks to the Director David Yocum for his dedication to my education and his support after I graduated. I reached out to Mr. Yocum for help when I launched my Salon and he took the time to visit my lease space and advise me on my salon set up and helped me with my equipment setup and supplies.

I am now a proud owner of a successful salon in Manhattan, Kansas and I can thankfully say I made a great decision joining the beauty industry and attending a career college focused on my success. Thank you Bellus Academy!
Donald “Skip” Courtois

Wichita Technical Institute
Topeka, Kansas

Currently, at Dunco Heating and Cooling in Lawrence, KS there is an employee who likes to be called “Skip.” What many people may not know is that Skip (Donald Courtois) graduated from WTI Topeka’s Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology (HACR) program after retiring as a Sergeant First Class veteran. Courtois served from 1984 to 2004 and “had trouble adapting to civilian life due to the lack of structure,” he continued, “I found that structure at WTI.” He started looking into WTI because friends had recommended the HVACR program.

Courtois credits his enrollment and his success to an instructor Rod Frank who “made the difference; he is brilliant with HVAC troubleshooting.” Before graduating WTI in March 2012 Courtois earned his EPA Universal and NATE certificate. Since graduation he obtained his Master HVAC certification. When asked to reflect on what he enjoyed most about being a student at WTI Courtois described his instructors: “They did a great job breaking down the information and explaining it in a way we could understand.” WTI is very glad that WTI Instructor Rod Frank was able to connect with Courtois and that Courtois is currently working in HVAC.
Brianna Cleaves
Bellus Academy
Manhattan, Kansas

My name is Brianna Cleaves and I am originally from San Diego, CA and I have been a military spouse for 9 years. I am currently studying to be a cosmetologist and makeup artist at Bellus Academy in Manhattan, KS. During high school I became passionate for the beauty industry and intrigued by all that it had to offer. By the end of my junior year of high school all of my future plans included attending Bellus Academy in San Diego. When it came time to decide my next steps after high school, being able to afford an education at Bellus Academy wasn’t an option. Directly after high school I pursued a 4 year degree in business management on a full softball scholarship, only to realize after a semester that my true passion would forever be in the beauty industry.

My journey took me to Kansas and I was excited there was a Bellus Academy in Kansas! The moment I walked into Bellus Academy the feeling of knowing I belonged here was beyond overwhelming. There is something truly powerful and inspiring about surrounding yourself with people who share your same passion and dreams; and having a team of educators who invest and believe in those dreams just as much as you do. During my time at Bellus Academy I have learned so much about who I am, who I want to be, and who I need to be for my husband and my family. I have met peers that become idols, friends that become family, and educators that I aspire to be. I am forever grateful.
John McGowan
Wichita Technical Institute
Wichita, Kansas

John McGowan’s military resume begins in 1989. He served in units like Desert Storm (Special Weapons Unit) and retired in 1993 as an E4 Specialist Promotable. McGowan felt that he held “jobs”, but none had the upwards mobility to build a career which led him to research WTI. McGowan chose Wichita WTI’s Electronic Systems Technology program because it fit what he was looking for regarding the hands-on training and curriculum. McGowan earned an impressive list of certifications while at WTI including: CompTIA A+ Certification, J-Standard Soldering Certification, FCC License, and CET Associate & Journeyman Licenses. Career Services created his resume and submitted it to PDS Tech for an on-site position at Rockwell Collins. Before his six-month contract was up (at PDS Tech) Rockwell Collins hired him directly and he has been employed with that company ever since. McGowan said there is “no way he would have qualified for the job at Rockwell Collins without his WTI training.” His success does not end there because he has been promoted to Service Center Technician and has applied for a new promotion of Lead Technician of the Global Landing Unit. McGowan says he uses his vocational training daily and would want someone considering WTI to know that “he is 48 years old, and it is never too late. If you have the will to do it, and the training is available, then you will succeed.”
Shannon Bagardo has always been drawn to helping people. In 2007, when the opportunity to join the Air Force presented itself, Bagardo enlisted and was on her way to what she says was one of the best decisions of her life.

Bagardo enjoyed her five-year active duty career as an aerospace medical technician. While in her role she learned about healthcare, and herself. “While in Afghanistan, I experienced critical care of patients and was surrounded by nurses on a daily basis. I was drawn to the skills and knowledge they possessed,” she said. “Being able to see a patient through trauma, working to stabilize them and then watching them recover is a truly remarkable experience.”

After meeting her husband, an active duty Army soldier himself, and having their first child, Bagardo decided to focus on her education. She had her eyes set on a nursing degree.

During multiple moves for her husband’s deployments, Bagardo had to start and stop several nursing programs. After finding stability in Topeka, Kansas, she found Rasmussen College. “Rasmussen got me to where I wanted to go, faster,” she said. “The College accepted more of my military credits and various other credits I picked up along the way.”

In March 2019, Bagardo graduated with her Professional Nursing Associate’s degree, but she’s not done learning yet. “I just passed my NCLEX, so I am officially an RN! In May I start a Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing degree program so I can continue to grow in this amazing field.”
Alexandra York

Bellus Academy
Manhattan, Kansas

My journey to the Beauty and Wellness industry began with enrolling in traditional college, then withdrawing and joining the army at age 19. After serving in the military I transitioned back to civilian life and worked on a new life plan. This plan led me to a private beauty and wellness college in Manhattan, KS.

What initially drew me to Bellus was how military friendly they were and how helpful the financial aid department was with assisting me in setting up my GI Bill®. I enrolled and attended Bellus and completed the massage therapy program in February of 2017. After receiving my certification in massage, I began working at a salon here in Manhattan, Kansas. It was there that my interest in cosmetology was peaked and once again, Bellus was at the top of my radar.

The educational opportunities at this school are unbeatable. This is a school where the entire staff - not just the educators - want you to succeed. They want to see you graduate and become successful in this [beauty] industry. I can confidently say that choosing to come to this school was easily one of the best decisions I could have made for myself, and for my education. Bellus Academy has truly set me up to enter the hair and beauty industry as a confident new hair artist, and for that I am very grateful.

After my time here at Bellus comes to an end, I plan to begin working at a new salon opening up in Manhattan.
Jerry Benton II tried a variety of career and education paths after serving in the army directly out of high school. Benton didn’t establish stability in construction work in Los Angeles and found the class sizes at Kansas State University’s Engineering program daunting. Benton enrolled in Topeka’s Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration program and instantly enjoyed the time in labs, flexible schedule, and hands-on learning. Benton recalled of his time at WTI: “I built confidence as a technician as I gained experience at WTI. I liked working with other people and discussing projects with my instructors.” The learning environment proved fruitful for Benton because he graduated with EPA Universal Certification, Building Science Principles and Industry Competency Exam (ICE) certifications. With Career Services help he went on several interviews after graduating and has found consistent employment in the HVAC field. Benton currently works at LBA Heating, Air Conditioning, and Plumbing. He feels very supported in his job and is working towards his Master Mechanical Certification that will allow him to work on city and state projects. Benton said that “the Army taught me to always have the freedom to maneuver and when you get stuck put one foot in front of the other,” luckily that mentality helped him to enroll and succeed at WTI.
My name is Karlea Reed, I am 27 Years old and I currently live in Manhattan, Kansas. I am originally from a small town in Western Kentucky called Paducah. I landed in Manhattan when my father who is also an Army Veteran received orders for Fort Riley, Kansas.

I served in the army after high school and I am proud to have served our country. After my service I became a mom and set out on my new career path. My daughter has changed my life and has inspired me to be so much more then I ever dreamed.

I never thought I could afford to go to school to pursue my dream and then I found out Bellus Academy offered the program I wanted. I called and asked if they accepted VA benefits and they said YES! I was literally blown away and realized my dream could come true.

Bellus Academy was definitely the best choice I could have ever made for helping me pursue the career path I desired. All of the educators were supportive of my career path throughout my training and they helped me step outside my comfort zone to reach my potential. I actually had the opportunity to be part of the school’s student council and was elected president of this organization for a 3 month term.

I am now on my way to my dream job and a career I love thanks to Bellus and their amazing team of educators.
When I was 12 years old my mom was deployed to Iraq to serve our country. During her deployment she experienced a moment when they were informed a bomb planned for their base had hit a mile away. I think of that moment often and it inspires me to do great things with my life.

I realized at a young age the commitment and danger to being in the military and I found that same calling and joined shortly after high school.

After serving our military I was medically discharged from the Army in 2016 and I didn’t really have a plan. I became passionate for the beauty industry and found a school that would help me launch my career.

My stepdad transferred his GI Bill® to me and I was so excited to find out that Bellus Academy accepted the GI Bill® so I could pursue my career. My experience at Bellus has been amazing with the education team and staff being so supportive of the students who were veterans or have family who were in the military. It has been the best feeling to see all the love and support we get from the Bellus Academy team. My experience here has been exciting and full of challenges as I work towards graduation to find my dream job. Not only have the educators been supportive of my journey, but I have been so thankful the administrative staff that has helped support dream to enter this amazing career.
William Curtis Peters IV

Wichita Technical Institute
Wichita, Kansas

William Curtis Peters IV (a veteran of eleven years) decided to embark on a new journey at WTI and enrolled in the Integrated Electronics Technology program. This journey led him to a lucrative career at The Bradbury Group and earned him the title of “Student of the Year” by Missouri Kansas Association of Private Career Colleges and Schools. This award was given to Peters because he had “achieved noteworthy success… and will serve as a role model to all students in private career schools”. Peters earned the following certifications at WTI: CompTIA A+, FCC License (Element 1&3), CET Associate, and J-Standard Solder. He described his success after graduation as “already making about 25% more than I had in previous places of employment.” Peters also described his value of WTI education was training with the same brands, products, and components that he worked with at Bradbury. What began as a retired soldier looking to expand his career beyond working for a farm and Ag dealer as a product manager has transformed his standard of living for the better. Peters continues to work in the electronics field at Case/New Holland and still visits the Wichita WTI campus.
Kristina Bondurant-Davis
Bellus Academy
Manhattan, Kansas

My name is Kristina Bondurant-Davis. I am from Abilene, KS and currently attending Bellus Academy in Manhattan, KS. I was a nursing major before I came to Bellus. I did not know what I wanted to do, but I did know I wanted to help people in some kind of way. I did not feel complete when I was attending a 4 year college, but here at Bellus I have never felt so at home. I looked at multiple beauty schools before choosing Bellus; they had so much to offer and all the educators actually care about you succeeding after your graduate.

At Bellus you have so many opportunities from going to KC fashion week, to attending events, and all the different classes you can take; all these opportunities helps you find your passion in what you want to do after you graduate. You will not feel lost after you leave, because our educators will go out of their way to make sure we know what we want to do in the next chapter of our life. I would not want to go anywhere else! I love this school! My dream job is to open up my own salon in Alaska to help educate people on how to take care of their hair with harsh weather.
I chose Delta College and my program of study, which was nursing, because after several deployments and having a child, I felt I needed to speed up my chances of being able to get my career started in the nursing field so I could support my family. Other colleges had waiting lists and years of classes required just to get into their nursing programs and I just didn’t have that sort of time and money to waste. Delta was going to offer a fast-paced learning environment that was going to get me to my goals the quickest.

I loved the fast pace and my instructors! They wanted to see me succeed and it was so encouraging!

Being able to use my Veteran’s benefits was extremely important because I needed all the financial support I could receive! I was married and had a family to help support. I earned by veteran benefits and I feel I should have the choice on how to use them – especially in a way that I feel will benefit me and my family. Everyone has different goals and different situations that they are in and I feel everyone should have the freedom to choose what sort of schooling should work best for them and their situation.

My education that I received from Delta College led me on a wonderful nursing journey! I was immediately employed after graduating at an Internal Medicine Clinic that I had experienced some of my clinical time at during school. I was also offered other nursing opportunities at other facilities as well but the clinic seemed to be a better fit for me. There I would grow as an experienced Practical Nurse and in a few short years I would become their Office Manager. There I was able to work and offer our clinic to other nursing students as a clinical site! Without my education at Delta College, I would not be able to share my success! I have thoroughly enjoyed becoming a nurse because it has been so rewarding in so many ways with helping others! Currently, I work prn when I am able to but have future plans to continue my nursing journey! Thanks Delta College for opening doors for me!
Responzia Burks

Medical Training College
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

I chose Medical Training College because their staff (in comparison to all the other schools I toured) showed a genuine interest in not just getting me enrolled in their school, but also about my future plans. I chose my program of study because of the length of the program and it was an easy career for me to transition into. The thing I liked most about Medical Training College was the staff. Everyone from the receptionist to the instructors showed respect and compassion for the students.

Using Veteran’s benefits at Medical Training College was very important because it was the only way I could pay for my education.

I’m a full time massage therapist and esthetician. The thing I like most about my career is that it provided a safe haven for me to do what I love and cope with my disability. The education I received at Medical Training College prepared me for this job by allowing me to get the necessary skills and license to be a business owner.
James Hoxie

Ayers Career College
Shreveport, Louisiana

Mr. James Hoxie served eight years in the United States Marine Corp prior to coming to Ayers Career College. James is married in which his wife is presently an active duty Airmen in the United States Air Force of 19 years. James has two children. One son serving in the United States Air Force and one daughter about to begin high school. James is currently using his veteran education benefits to complete his studies in Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning. James’ end goal is to become EPA certified and start his own HVAC company.

James states that he’s very satisfied with how the program and Ayers Career College works hand in hand to assist veteran students. Since coming to Ayers Career College, James has enjoyed his experience at Ayers Career College. James states he enjoys the hands-on lab, and he feels the teachers are very informative and open to students asking a lot of questions. James also feels that having the hands-on experience at Ayers Career College has prepared him both technically and mentally for his upcoming career in the HVAC industry.

In conclusion, James adds that HVAC is a growing industry and Ayers Career College will definitely put you on the right track and will ensure student success by providing an excellent educational pathway, support and accountability to help all students succeed.
I am a 20 year veteran. I served in the US Marine Corps as a Radio Technician and the Air National Guard as a Satellite Communication Technician, 1988-2013. I am also an ITI Technical College graduate and an ITI success story.

Over the years, I have been in many different learning environments from multiple military classes to major university courses. These are two completely different worlds. A major university has large lecture halls with distractions, curriculums filled with fluff classes and are slow in putting people into jobs. I feel SLU wasted my time and consumed my GI Bill®. My inability to pass basic courses unrelated to my field of study slowed my career advancement.

In the military, I excelled in the “get in/ get out” type of learning. This accelerated rate at which personnel learn helps them enter the job field as soon as possible. Years later, I attended ITI’s HVAC and Electrical 18 month certificate program. Before graduating, I was hired into a major corporation in my field of study which eventually led to my current work at Trane Building Services. I graduated Summa Cum Laude, was awarded for Perfect Attendance, and was on the 4.0 Honor Roll ending my first enrollment at ITI. I went back, graduated Summa Cum Laude again, and received ITI’s AOS degree.

I believe that since Veterans earn the GI Bill® for their service, they should be able to attend the type of college or university that is conducive to their learning style or career choice. I had exhausted my GI funds at the major university and therefore paid for my certificate program and AOS degree myself. Colleges like ITI help veterans, like me, gain knowledge and marketable skills transferrable into a career field.
I am a 46 year old mother of two teenagers. My family moved to West Monroe when my husband retired from the Army in 2014. I needed a job. I found a job as a childcare teacher and program manager, but I really did not want to be in childcare forever. I had been interested in massage therapy for over 10 years, but I did not know where to find a school. I knew that I wanted a change, so I looked up schools near me. Unitech Training Academy came up as a top search. I applied seven months before I started classes. I had to wait for the right time to start because I still had to work. I started classes as soon as I could. I have been able to keep up working and going to school at the same time. Classes are hard, but interesting. Massage therapy is a hands-on field. Classes include lab time full of hands-on experience. I was not worried about what I didn’t know. I just wanted to learn as much as possible in as many areas available. Difficult does not mean impossible. I just keep showing up, taking notes, and asking questions. Ms. Linder tells us all the time, “Not passing does not mean failure. It just means you have to try again.”

Unitech Training Academy was the right choice for me because it is local, affordable, and right on time. I am glad that I have been able to attend Unitech Training Academy. I tell all my friends who want a change to check out Unitech.
Lori Lewis

Medical Training College
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

I chose MTC because I needed a career path that fit my new life as a first time mother. I chose the dental assistant program because I wanted to be a part of making other people know the importance of their dental care and how it is linked to your overall health.

I liked that Medical Training College was flexible with having a part-time job while still being in school and I like the organization and effort that all of the staff put into each student. They were always so encouraging and really showed that they wanted the best for you.

It was extremely important for me to be able to use my VA benefits at Medical Training College. I had previously finished a program at a different school and after I had my first child, needed to make a change so that I could provide for my child and have a career as well as have time to spend with my child.

I work at a Periodonal office. I love the office and the people that I work with and I am always happy to see patients' results after their treatment. It is such a rewarding career knowing you helped give someone's outlook on their oral health a boost to make them want to participate in their own oral health through the education we are able to give our patients.

Medical Training College laid the foundation for me to build onto my career as a Treatment Assistant with my current employer. I was actually unaware of all the education I gained while there and how important it was to have the training before I went out into the workforce and started my career.

Please do not get rid of Veterans Benefits. We worked hard for those benefits and sacrificed much time away from our families to be able to use them and it just would feel like betrayal if they were taken from us from any school we choose to attend. We made a sacrifice not many people make and we should be acknowledged for that sacrifice.
Francis Schmitt

Delta College
Slidell, Louisiana

I chose Delta College because there was not a wait list to get into a nursing program. Admission was based on if you could pass an entrance exam. My husband is in the military, so we move a lot! It was a fast program for me to earn an LPN diploma while we were in Louisiana. My ultimate plan was to be able to begin working as an LPN and go back to school elsewhere after we transferred for RN.

I loved how small it was and how the instructors treated you. I feel that the LPN program definitely gave me the foundation to go back for my RN degree if not more knowledge than I learned while in school for my RN degree.

Being able to use Veterans benefits was very important. If it weren’t for my husband allowing me to use his Post-9/11 GI Bill®, there would have been no way I could have afforded to go to Delta.

I work on a med surg floor as an RN. I received my LPN diploma from Delta prior to becoming an RN. I love the fact that every day I come to work I have the opportunity to make a difference in someone’s life. Whether it’s being a listener, a healer, or just the nurse that they will never forget because of the pride and compassion I have for my job.

I feel that the education I received at Delta prepared me more for my job than the next school I attended to further my degree. I graduated second in my class and most definitely had to work for that. I still use and remember skills that my instructors taught me at Delta College in Slidell.
Tiffany Washington
Delta College of Arts & Technology
Lafayette, Louisiana

I chose Delta because it worked around my schedule and I had a newborn. I chose the program because I needed to make sure the medical field is where I wanted to be. The hours and the teachers were what I liked best at Delta.

Being able to use my Veteran’s Benefits was very important. At the time, I wasn’t making enough income to pay out of pocket.

I like my work environment and the people. And the schedule. The education I received at Delta was important in preparing me for my new job that I was offered, while I was on my externship that Delta placed me at.

Gloria Alfred
Fortis College
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

My name is Gloria. I am a veteran who served my country in the United States Army for 8 years. I am currently enrolled in the Surgical Technologist Program here at Fortis College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Furthering my education is important to me. I feel that I have a lot of drive left in me and I want to use it to help save lives. On top of being a veteran, I am a mother of four beautiful little girls that look up to me. I want my daughters to see how hard their mom worked to get to where she is. I know that if my daughters watch me reach the goals I have set for myself, that they will attempt to reach their goals also. So far this career change has been smooth. My instructors here at Fortis College put their every effort in training us for success. As far as classmates, we have formed our own little family and appreciate the different types of backgrounds in which we all come from. I have entrusted Fortis College to be a part of my transitioning process and so far I am satisfied.
Kenneth Mejia is a graduate of our EKG/Phlebotomy program. He worked in the military in the medical field and once he became a civilian was no longer allowed to perform the same tasks outside of the military. After searching for nearby schools to obtain the proper certifications he enrolled at Unitech Training Academy. Completing the program on time was the goal but that would be hindered by a medical issue which was discovered during class. Kenneth had several “episodes” where his heartbeat felt irregular. His teacher and classmates decided to run an EKG on him. He was then able to take those results to his own doctor who quickly determined he had dangerous heart condition that only about 20,000 individuals in the US have and often causes sudden death. Within days Kenneth was undergoing surgery for his pacemaker/defibrillator. His clinicals would have to wait until her returned, which ironically enough was at the same hospital he worked in. Aside from personal pride his first bonus from completing his new certification came when his employer increased his pay. He now performs all the EKG’s that come through the ER. He loves his job because he knows he plays a part in saving lives and what could be more fulfilling than that? Kenneth witnessed classmates transform daily from student to professional and loved every minute. In addition, Kenneth has decided to pursue his dreams even further and the next step is going back to school for Practical Nursing.
Hollie Hughes

Delta College of Arts & Technology
Lafayette, Louisiana

I chose Delta because the LPN night class and me working a full-time job – it worked for me. I wanted to be a nurse to be able to give back to those who helped me love what I’m doing. The teachers were what I liked most.

Being able to use my Veteran’s Benefits saved me money but also allowed me to get an education.

What I like most about my career is being able to help people; to educate them and doing what I love. The education at Delta gave me the tools I needed to be able to successfully help others.
David King

Delta College
Covington, Louisiana

I choose Delta because it was close to home. I injured my shoulder using a pair of crutches. I was given a sling and codeine by the doctor. After 3 months of this my shoulder became immobile and very painful. My wife was seeing a massage therapist at the time and she suggested that I come in to see her. I was skeptical at first but I had nothing to lose so I went. By my second visit I noticed my shoulder getting better. I saw her twice a week. I regained full use of my arm within a month. I was sold on the healing qualities of massage therapy and receive a massage once a month since. This was in 2005.

If I had not been able to use my Veteran’s benefits, it would have taken me longer to become a massage therapist.

What I like most about my career is helping people to relieve pain. Without the excellent guidance of the staff, I would not be able to work in this industry.
Jeannette Mendoza

Delta College
Covington, Louisiana

I chose Delta because it was convenient for me. The location was less than 10 miles from home. After I had my daughter, I thought going to college would be hard, being a single mom. This short course led me to the right direction. I now have a wonderful job I love thanks to Delta College. The teachers are phenomenal. They answered all my questions and were very informative.

Being able to use my Veteran’s benefits at Delta College was very important.

In my new career, I like that I get to work with people and help make a difference. Delta prepared me in so many ways. I’ve become better at job interviewing skills and communication skills.
My name is David Matthew Hernandez. I am a Lincoln College of Technology student, a Federal Work Study student and US Coast Guard Veteran. I chose to come to Lincoln College of Technology because of the outstanding Electrical and Electronics System Technician program (EEST), and their dedication to helping veterans transition into the civilian workforce. This school has changed my life. I was complacent in my career simply because it was all I knew. When I took the tour of the school and saw all that Lincoln College of Technology could offer me, I didn’t hesitate to join the school. Lincoln College of Technology has given me a second chance at a career and a better life. Everything I have learned here at Lincoln College has sculpted me into a functioning member of the US workforce.

I am grateful to be a student, and an employee of this school.
My military career started when I was 17, just about to enter my senior year of high school. In the summer of 2011, I decided that I wanted to enlist in the Navy. I didn’t have the financial means or the confidence to go straight to college after high school. My mom was eager to allow me to join and she signed my under-age waiver with ease. My dad struggled to let me enlist, but after some persuasion he finally agreed. I shipped out of Minnesota and headed to RTC Great Lakes in Illinois. At boot camp I learned all of the basic skills that would be necessary to survive in the Navy and graduated from boot camp in August of 2012.

Right from boot camp I left for Hospital Corps at A-School at Fort Sam Houston, where I learned the advanced skills for my specific trade, then I attended C-School for dental assisting. I then received my orders for NHC Patuxent River.

I got to NHC in February 2013. I worked in the dental department. I advanced rank to E-4. My command chose me to be a part of the Auxiliary Security Force for the base. Then they sent me on Temporary Assigned Duty to NBHC Dahlgren, Virginia because of my wide range of skills. After 6 months I returned to NHC Patuxent River to finish my contract.

During my five years on active duty in the Navy I was awarded a Navy Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Sharpshooter ribbon on the m9, Marksman ribbon on the m16, Global War on Terrorism Medal and the National Defense Medal. On June 25th 2017 I separated honorably from the world’s greatest Navy. Then on June 26th 2017, I started my new adventure in the Dental Hygiene Program at Fortis College.
My name is Tawny Baucom and I am a veteran of the US Army. I am writing this letter to share my experience with North American Trade Schools in Baltimore with you.

I decided to get training in a trade after serving 8 years in the military. I’m an Army veteran. I’m currently working in commercial HVAC and refrigeration. Going to NATS was an amazing opportunity for me. I took several college classes through the years before I decided to go to trade school. I enjoy using the skills I started to develop in the military and improving them. I love working with my hands, not just sitting behind a desk.

I am happy with my decision to attend NATS and the training has been beneficial. I’m currently working in commercial HVAC and refrigeration and was hired right out of school. I believe that it should be our choice where we can use our GI Bill® to attend school.
Ronald Clayton
Fortis College
Baltimore, Maryland

My name Ronald J. Clayton, a retired Staff Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. I reside in the state of Maryland and am currently attending Fortis College in Landover. I am due to complete my certification in the Medical Billing and Coding Program in May 2019. I retired from the Marine Corps in July 2000 and from 2001 to May 2017 I was employed as a Special Police Officer until my disabilities forced me to leave that profession. I knew about Fortis College because my daughter and niece had successfully completed their programs in Medical Assistance and Billing and Coding, so I decided to pursue that career in May 2018. What I have learned and experienced from Fortis College is so invaluable, because of the professionalism from the staff, the teachers and the administrators who made my transition very smooth. Fortis College has a system where achieving your goal in your course of studies is very much attainable if you do your part. From the Financial Aid Department, the Learning Resource Center to the Receptionist, the staff members were always approachable and helpful to me, and especially the teachers who are on the frontline of my learning experience and were there with positive motivation and encouragement.

Due to the outstanding teaching and learning environment from Fortis College, I am well prepared and equipped to obtain employment as a Medical Billing and Coding professional. I have highly recommended Fortis College to my family and friends.
My name is Marco Bazan. I am a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. I served 4 years, from 2013 to 2017. I chose to attend North American Trade Schools to pursue a career I dreamed about. I love to work with my hands so a trade school was a good fit for me. I plan on using my training in the field in real world experiences.

This experience has allowed me to grow as a person and improve myself.

My name is Jeffrey Leach and I am a veteran of the US Air Force. I am writing this letter to share my experience with North American Trade Schools in Baltimore with you.

I decided to get training in a trade after serving 20 years in the military. I chose NATS because they offered the type of training I was interested in and they are a small school where I could get individual attention. I am happy with my decision to attend NATS and the training has been beneficial. I plan to use my training for my own education. I am using all of the skills that were taught to me. Being able to use my GI Bill® at this great trade school has made me a much more capable man.
Heavenly Lowe

All State Career School
Baltimore, Maryland

I was a 92y (Unit Supply Specialist) soldier stationed at Fort Drum New York. During my time spent in New York I became married and had a son. A few months after the birth of my son, my husband and I became veterans and decided the best thing to do was to move to Maryland to continue our journey as a family.

Before I came to Maryland I was doing research on jobs and opportunities and I came across a lot of jobs that wanted me to have experience or a degree that I couldn’t apply my skills and training to, so I decided the best thing for me to do was to immediately use my GI Bill® and go to school. I came across All State Career on the internet as I was searching for schools and decided to call after viewing all the programs they had available. My husband Terrell Smallwood was a 88M (truck driver) so I convinced him to take the CDL program for his certificates sense he already had a memorandum for his CDL license. I decided becoming a Medical Assistant and going to All State to attend the program was best for me. Financial Aid walked us through the process and of course accepted our GI Bill®. I’m now an enrolled student who started on October 15 and soon to be a graduate in June. As for my husband he graduated with his license and certifications in November and now is going to school to be a Diesel Mechanic.
My name is Brilee Durden and I am a veteran of the US Army. I am writing this letter to share my experience with North American Trade Schools in Baltimore with you.

I decided to get training in a trade after serving 3 years in the military. I chose NATS because they offered training in a shorter time than college and that would lead to employment quicker for me. I am happy with my decision to attend NATS and the training has been beneficial. I am currently employed in the Electrical Trade and was hired right out of school. I believe that it should be our choice where we can use our GI Bill® to attend school.

My name is Daniel Joseph Leemans and I am a veteran of the US Navy. I am writing this letter to share my experience with North American Trade Schools in Baltimore with you.

I decided to get training in a trade after serving 4 years in the U S Navy. I chose to attend NATS because I wanted to have a better future and become a valued member of society. I am happy with my decision to attend NATS and the training has been beneficial.

I plan to use my training to become a better individual and have a great and bright future for me and my family.
My name is Eric Tate and I am a veteran of the U.S Marine Corp. I am writing this letter to share my experience with North American Trade Schools in Baltimore with you.

I decided to get training in a trade after serving 4 years in the U.S Marines. I chose to attend NATS because I was looking to go to a trade school for diesel tech and read that the program there and the teachers were awesome so I applied. I am happy with my decision to attend NATS and the training has been beneficial.

I plan to use my training as a stepping stone in the diesel technology field and it has been a life changing decision.
Alyssa Linkamper

MTTI
Seekonk, Massachusetts

Alyssa served four years in the United States Air Force as a Jet Engine Mechanic. She left the military, concerned that if deployed, there would be no one to care for her young daughter.

After working seven years as a medical biller, she searched for training to license as an Aircraft Maintenance Technician. Instead, MTTI’s Marine Technician program caught her interest.

“I had never even started an outboard motor! Mechanical experience in the Air Force helped, but working on a plane crew is very different from working on a boat. MTTI’s program included an internship, to help me get into the field. As a Career Changer, and a single mother, I wanted to be sure I’d have a paycheck when I graduated.”

The only female—and the smallest person in the class—Alyssa experienced some doubts. “I was excited to be learning. It was a good feeling to have my hands on something I could fix. As a smaller person, I learned it was ok to ask for help. I could help in return because I was able to crawl into spaces that were difficult for a larger person to access.”

After internship, Alyssa was hired at Onset Bay Marina as a Marine Technician; she is now a Dockmaster. This winter, she’s also been promoting marine careers as the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association’s workforce liaison.

“Juggling all of my responsibilities when I was a single mom, a student, and an intern—seemed daunting. You think you can’t do all that—but you figure it out. I love working in the marine industry. MTTI really does set you up to be successful and to have a career. Attending MTTI was the best decision I made.”
Mike Fitzpatrick

Porter and Chester
Canton, Massachusetts

My name is Mike and I’m a electrical student at the Porter & Chester Institute’s campus located in Canton, MA. I’m very proud to simultaneously be working on my 19th year of service with the US Army. During that time I’ve deployed for both Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. I’m thankful to have learned substantially while serving my country. I am humbled by forging friendships with some of the highest caliber individuals, and enlightened by traveling to the corners of the globe while wearing the uniform. I’ve always had a view of life comparative to that of a journey. That said, my studies at Porter & Chester are the current location as I continue along my life’s journey. The skills that I am learning here in the electrical program are enabling me to successfully achieve the next destination of life goals along my chosen path: The aspiration to earn my electrical license and someday have my own electrical business.

Through my service, I earned educational benefits through the Veterans Administration. Being a married father of a family with 4 young children, I would never be able to accomplish the goals I set without my VA benefits. My time at PCI has been a great experience full of everything one seeks in an educational pursuit. Top notch instructors with lifetimes of relative experience in the field, second-to-none work labs to afford invaluable hands-on experience, and an administrative staff postured to assist with the unforeseen challenge as they arise. I feel extremely fortunate to be a student at PCI and would choose this path ten times out of the next ten times anyone would ever give me that option.
After serving four years in the US Marine Corps, Michael went from job to job. “I never found anything I enjoyed much or felt proud to be doing.”

He was excited to enroll in MTTI’s HVAC/R Program to learn something new. “I was the oldest person in my class. We all got along well, and helped one another. My instructor made sure we understood the information before going onto something new. Career Services was a huge help in assisting us with resumes, interview practice and scheduling employer visits.”

During school, Michael found he liked the technical complexity of refrigeration. “I feel fortunate now to be a Refrigeration Apprentice at SS Service Corp, working in the area that most interests me. Hired on the first day of internship, I felt they were investing in me. The Tech who trained me would ask questions to test me. I was able to answer correctly, which speaks well of the school—especially because I had no previous HVAC/R experience.”

Michael finds there are many career paths in HVAC/R—and work is plentiful. “MTTI’s HVAC/R program counts as one year toward the Massachusetts Journeyman’s License. After two years on-the-job, I will have the additional 4,000 hours to be eligible for the license. If you go to school at MTTI, you’ll be ahead of the game.”

“I wanted to find a sense of purpose; now I take pride in the work I do. I’m doing interesting work that has a good future, and I’m helping people. The work is rewarding; everyone is appreciative when I fix their equipment. It gives me a sense of accomplishment. I only wish I had gone to school a long time ago. I will enjoy working for another twenty years in HVAC/Refrigeration.”
Tyler Tehan

Porter and Chester
Canton, Massachusetts

I have been attending Porter and Chester Institute in Canton, Massachusetts since October of 2018. It has been one of the best decisions I’ve made since retiring from the Military. I wasn’t sure exactly what trade I wanted to do at first but once I completed a tour of the campus I was very intrigued by the electrical program. The electrical lab was awesome, looked very fun and the learning seemed endless. I’m very happy with the decision I made. PCI has been really fun thus far, all of the lab projects are enjoyable and make you think with real life scenarios. The staff is great and also a good portion of the school is military so the camaraderie is always present. Overall it has been really satisfying between all the hard work everyone puts in and the friendships I’ve made. Everyday I look forward to going to school and would highly recommend this program to others. I can’t wait to apply my knowledge at a real job site.
Alejandro Puente  
MTTI  
Seekonk, Massachusetts

Active in the Army National Guard, Alejandro worked as a mold remediation specialist. “The money was great; I wanted to do more to help people be healthy.” “At MTTI, I learned anatomy, physiology and medical terminology to communicate with doctors. We practiced clinical and patient communication skills. The Instructors helped us develop personal traits needed for success in a medical practice.”

“Working nights, while attending school week, I often stayed up late studying. I struggled to make up school work missed while serving in the Army National Guard. My instructor went above and beyond to help me catch-up and go forward.” A full-time Medical Assistant at Lincoln Urgent Care, Alejandro is busy. “I take vital signs, give flu shots; suture; perform EKGs, phlebotomy and diagnostic tests. Medical practitioners count on us to make patients comfortable, get their history and perform the indicated procedures. Doctors I work with are impressed that, just out of school, I’m able to give injections and perform many hands-on procedures.”

Friends ask Alejandro about being a male Medical Assistant. “Some male patients are more comfortable talking with another male about certain symptoms. I always ask young girls and women if they feel comfortable having me do a procedure, or if they prefer a female practitioner. If you can make a patient—male or female—feel comfortable, you can be successful as a Medical Assistant.

I’ve already helped soldiers in my National Guard unit with skills I learned at MTTI. The Army sent me to the Combat Lifesaver Course, to prepare for the actual experience of saving lives in the battlefield or other hostile situations. I look forward to using my training to provide medical care in the military.
Michael Cooper

Porter and Chester
Canton, Massachusetts

Michael attended the day program at Porter and Chester in Canton, October 2017-2019.

I was impressed with the depth of the HVAC curriculum and the job equipment was great. I came here after retiring and this place trained me to be completely prepared for a new career. Some people don’t put in the full effort required to succeed, but I found that with this program, the reading, studying and having hands on lessons really helped me be fully prepared. I always read and reviewed things and they became more clear to me in the lab. I wouldn’t have been able to find a decent career without a year at this school. I believe it would be a shame not to help other veterans in need like this school did for me and I hope others will get the chance to further their education and solidify their futures in a career of their choice.
Prior to attending MSC, Alanna served in active duty as a cryogenic technician in the Marine Corps. Her job was to make liquid and gaseous nitrogen and oxygen and regularly tested oxygen for purity. Since the oxygen they created was used as aviator’s breathing oxygen, purity was of the highest importance.

Once promoted to the rank of corporal, upward mobility allowed Alanna to execute her leadership role. Her duties as corporal were management-oriented, and also included routine maintenance inspections and counseling of Marines.

Alanna says that the years she spent in the Marine Corps were incredibly beneficial to her self-development. One of the Marine’s leadership principles is “know yourself and seek self-improvement”, which she credits as the most useful skill she uses to this day.

Alanna planned to visit multiple schools when she set out on her journey to be a cosmetologist, but when she stepped onto the MSC campus she immediately felt welcomed. She fell in love with the atmosphere and felt she didn’t need to search any further! She says that she knows that she made the right choice selecting this program. She says she loves that she learns new things every day.

After graduation, Alanna hopes to continue her education at a salon in the Twin Cities area with further in-house training. She says that she would love to manage her own salon where she can embrace her love of vintage hairdressing.
Doug Linburg

Institute of Production and Recording
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Prior to attending IPR, Doug was enlisted in the Navy. He served as a Machinist Mate Auxiliary Mechanic in the US Navy on the USS Columbus out of Pearl Harbor from 2008-2013. During his time stationed in Hawaii, Doug was responsible for all of the submarine’s non-nuclear mechanical equipment. He says that his experience working in submarines had helped him to handle high-stress situations, no matter the environment.

Doug first learned about IPR in high school, as he had a friend in the APE program he would record with often. In 2008, Doug applied to IPR but could not afford tuition. After five years in the Navy and IPR becoming accredited, it was obvious to him that he had to go to IPR.

Doug Linburg has since received 4 different associate degrees from IPR. He now holds degrees in Audio Production and Engineering, Live Sound and Show Production, Music and Entertainment Business, and Sound Design for Visual Media.

While attending IPR, Doug started laying the foundation for his company, Initiative Media Group. Shortly after graduating from his final degree program, he applied for and obtained his LLC. He intends to continue pushing his brand locally and eventually nationally/worldwide.

Doug says IPR was extremely beneficial in every aspect for each of the degrees he obtained. From the knowledge he gained in his field, to the friends he made, both students and faculty, each person has been an inspiration to him in one way or another.
Lindsey Tollefson

Minnesota School of Cosmetology
Plymouth, Minnesota

Lindsey joined the National Guard in 2014. Lindsey’s base is located out of Arden Hills, Minnesota and is part of the FRU (Force Ready Unit).

Lindsey has always wanted a career in Massage Therapy and enjoyed giving people massages in her free time. Her husband told her to “go for it” so Lindsey began researching schools and came across Minnesota School of Cosmetology. She chose Minnesota School of Cosmetology Plymouth because it offered a full-time massage program. She was able to start school and graduate in a short time frame while still fulfilling her duties in the National Guard.

Lindsey knew she would learn a lot in the Massage program but didn’t realize how much each and every body part plays a role in massage not only for the person receiving the massage but also what the body can do when giving a massage. She has also learned how important massage can be to someone’s health and well-being.

Once Lindsey graduates she is excited to bring massage to her unit by doing chair massages after major workouts or even if they have some down time. She also plans to assist the safety NCO (Non Commissioned Officer). One day, Lindsey plans to own her own Massage Therapy business.
Joshua Williamson

Institute of Production and Recording
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Prior to attending IPR, Joshua was enlisted in the Alaska Army National Guard-Aviation Branch. During his time, he was stationed in Alaska, Virginia, South Carolina, Texas and Pennsylvania for training. He also spent time in Kuwait in 2013. His MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) was as a 15D Aviation Powertrain Mechanic, servicing rotor systems and transmissions on Army helicopters.

Joshua says that his military experience has given him great discipline, which has taught him to never give up on things because they are difficult. Serving in the military also gave Joshua a sense of appreciation for working and studying in a field that he is passionate about.

Joshua chose IPR after a friend he was attending classes with at the University Of Alaska Anchorage told him about it. Josh was studying aviation maintenance but wanted to get more involved in music after he recorded his band’s first album.

Joshua graduated in the summer of 2017. He is now on staff as an assistant engineer at Flowers Studio in Uptown Minneapolis. He works full-time as the lead audio engineer at the Varsity Theater, and is hoping to advance to production manager this summer.

Joshua says attending IPR was very beneficial to him in many ways. He was able to learn from so many great industry professionals in many different subjects. Every aspect of his education is used daily, whether running sound, in the studio, or performing in/managing his band.
Mary Chambers

Institute of Production and Recording
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Prior to attending IPR, Mary was enlisted in the Navy. Mary chose IPR because it had a program dedicated to sound design, rather than film or music creation.

After graduation, Mary hopes to work in the immersive sound space developing soundscapes for extended reality (XR) and audio only experiences. She also hopes to extend her knowledge in sound design for film and television.

Mary says that IPR has been instrumental in helping her to develop her technical skills. Mary also credits IPR for allowing her to develop the skills to work with actual clients.
Brandon Louderback

Wichita Technical Institute
Joplin, Missouri

Brandon Louderback saw that his position with the City of Joplin was being phased out and while he had had 14 years’ experience in the Air National Guard he looked to WTI to find “a sense of job security that he would not have had.” Louderback enrolled in Joplin WTI’s Computer Technology and Network Administration program and earned CompTIA A+ and Microsoft Technology Associate: Networking certifications before graduating. Louderback described his instructors as educators who were “fair” and “repeatedly challenged” his abilities in order for him to succeed. At WTI, Louderback had the opportunity to troubleshoot WTI’s network and create a virtual reality environment for medical use. He has worked on many projects for the City of Joplin including: Desktop and Server Virtualization, Web Server maintenance and updates, VOIP, and Network Diagramming. But Louderback’s “sense of accomplishment” did not stop at graduation because he earned his FAA certification allowing him to operate drones and is currently working on Network+, Server+ and GIST certifications. Louderback came to WTI looking for stability for his wife and kids and found not only stability but a bright growing IT career.
Avion Bryant

Wichita Technical Institute
Joplin, Missouri

One day, on his drive home, veteran Avion Bryant spontaneously stopped in at WTI’s Joplin Open House and found his next career path. Bryant heroically served his country for eight years traveling all over Iraq and Europe. He was discharged with the distinguished rank of Staff Sargent. Bryant hoped to find hands-on training that fit his learning style. As a civilian, Bryant entrusted his future to WTI’s Computer Technology and Network Administration program. Though Bryant felt like he was “starting from scratch” with computers he also claimed that “he owes his success to his IT instructors.” Bryant earned the following certifications at WTI: CompTIA A+ and Microsoft Technology Associate: Networking Fundamentals. Thanks to his proven level of expertise Career Services placed him in a Help Desk Intern position at Freeman Hospital. Since then, he has been promoted to Desktop Support Specialist to his current title of Site Coordinator where he is also working on his Cisco CCNA certification. WTI is very glad that Bryant said that his “hard work has paid off” and that he will remember “always being greeted with a friendly word when coming in the door.” WTI is delighted to have Bryant as an alumnus and cannot wait to see what he accomplishes next.
My name is Carmella and I served active duty from 2010 to 2014 in the United States Air Force. I deployed once overseas during my service. My active duty occupation was aircraft maintenance specializing in instrument and flight controls. I also served as flight line support where I loaded equipment onto and off aircraft. I also served 4 months as an Honor Guardsman at my military base’s Honor Guard. There I performed in military ceremonies which included funerals and color guard. I also served 7 months in the Air Force Reserve attached to a Medical Air Evacuation unit. I decided to leave the military to pursue a full-time education. I received my EMT Certificate in 2016 and earned an Associate’s Degree in Natural Science in 2017. During my clinical courses in the EMT program I attended, I worked with a few Respiratory Therapists in the emergency room. I then decided I wanted to further my career in respiratory care.

There were not many schools that offered Respiratory Care programs. It was also difficult to find opportunities to start courses immediately. I chose to attend Carrington College because the opportunity was available and the schedule deemed fit. Once I earn my degree in Respiratory Care, my ultimate goal is to gain experience and work in medical air transport.
Terrance Giordano

Asher College
Las Vegas, Nevada

I chose a vocational school for several reasons. First, I have been performing IT related work for many years in my career. I was concerned about being current in the field of IT and a vocational school would help me get to the level I desired most quickly. I chose Asher College out of three vocational school choices because of the positive comments I received during a Q&A session at the local Veterans Administration office. Second, I did not have enough VA benefits to qualify for a master’s program related to my bachelor’s degree. Therefore, a technical school was required.

What worked for me in a vocational school was having flexibility. In addition, looking at the programs offered and the timeframe for completion, it was important to attend a school that would provide the greatest success in getting a job in the shortest amount of time spent in the classroom.

Once I completed my program, I was able to use the information I learned to create an IT Technical Support position for myself at a non-profit I have worked with for several years.

For me, a vocational school like Asher College was the best option for my career objectives and lifestyle.
Being in the service you learn that the mission can only be completed by great leadership, a well-oiled operation, and members that work hard to get the job done efficiently. That is why I chose Carrington College. From the moment I walked on to the campus the atmosphere was professional and inviting. The staff eager to answer questions and give tours of the campus while providing information on the programs they offered there. I knew I wanted to be a Physical Therapist Assistant, but the moment I saw where the PTA classes were to be taught, I knew Carrington College was where I was going to become one. The classes were nicely set up with equipment along the walls and devices you would normally see in a physical therapy clinic. The instructors were exceedingly knowledgeable and always willing to help if needed. The structure of classes with an implementation of hands-on and an emphasis on the importance of continuing to educate yourself outside of the classroom, has given me an affinity for learning. The education I received from Carrington and the instructors has prepared me to exceed wherever I go. I intend to continue to grow in my career as a Physical Therapist Assistant and beyond grateful that Carrington College provided me with top-notch education and a path that has set me up for success.
My name is Mark Moore. I am a veteran of the U.S. Navy currently enrolled at Lincoln Tech in South Plainfield, New Jersey. For veterans like myself whose careers while in the Navy involved mechanical work (mine being an aircraft mechanic), a technical school like this is what helps me better myself. Taking these schools away will only hinder the Vets coming out. They would have to learn a completely new skill and would not have the opportunities to apply the skills that they were trained for in their military career.

At Lincoln Tech it’s a lot of hands-on mechanical training which is best for a profession like this. There is only so much you can learn from books in this field, so a lot of it is hands on training that gives you the knowledge and the chance to work with the equipment to better yourself in this field. I’ve always had a good general knowledge about all types of mechanics but what Lincoln Tech has done is broaden my specific knowledge of the diesel field. The instructors work with the student to help teach them and they give us the chance to learn from each other as well.

The way the classes are set up help you learn at a smooth pace starting from the basics of tools and hardware, working your way up to breaking down and building a variety of engines and then taking it even further. It’s not limited to one specific task, you work your way in and around a piece of equipment that you are learning about, which is the way you should be trained. They go above and beyond in their training aspects and if there is something you don’t have an answer to, you are provided all the resources to find the answer.

So, taking away a school that works well for vets and helps us in our careers would affect anybody who went into the armed forces and left the service with a trade. It will only set people back in their lives and would require us to start all over again.
Clinton Cupples
Fortis Institute
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

I joined the United States Army March 3rd 2019, as 11B, infantryman. I served eight years as an 11B and six years as a 91B, Light Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic, for a total 14 years of active federal service and currently serve in the Army Reserves as a Staff sergeant (E-6). I have participated in 4 combat tours during OIF and OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom).

Like some, I am a very hands-on person so I decided to join the HVAC program at Fortis Institute to sharpen my technical skills in heating and refrigeration because it goes hand and hand on what I currently do for a living. I hope the skills I attain at Fortis Institute will set me up to successfully start my career in the HVAC world.
In August, 2016, I enrolled in ACI Medical and Dental School’s Medical Assistant Program by taking advantage of the post 911 GI Bill®. ACI allowed me to re-hone my medical skills that I obtained throughout my 17 years in the US Army. The environment at ACI is not only military friendly, but it also provided me with instructors that are experts in their field. The education I received at ACI allowed me to gain employment at Centrastate Medical Center as a Patient Care Technician. All of the patients on this unit have cardiac related conditions. The knowledge I obtained at ACI allowed me to sharpen my skills in Patient Care and EKG. These skills were recognized by Centrastate on numerous occasions in which I received “Centra Stars” for going above and beyond. I also re-attended ACI to participate in the Medical and Dental Administrative Assistant program. This new skill set has enabled me to learn new skills while still being credentialed in the medical field where I have gained new experience as the front desk coordinator at Shore Cardiology. I would highly recommend ACI Medical and Dental School to any military student looking for a new career jumpstart.
I am proud to say that I am part of the 1% of the United States that has devoted their lives to fighting for our country. The sacrifices my brothers and sisters in arms have voluntarily made for the people of the United States far outweigh some of the benefits we have received. We spend months, sometimes years away from our loved ones in foreign countries fighting a war with no end in sight. Those of us who are fortunate enough to come home are not always in one piece.

It is extremely difficult to acclimate to civilian life once you have been to war. You lose your sense of self and have to figure out who you are again. That’s what education gives back to us. We define ourselves by what we do. Soldiers who come home and can no longer serve their country need something to fall back on. Those that are unable to find that eventually become a statistic.

Many military members join the military because they feel that they are not college material and it’s the best alternative for them. Schools that provide hands-on training, certification, and job placement also are a great alternative for them once they come home. Why take away something so beneficial from people who have given up so much?

There are so many who joined because of the educational incentives. Personally, there is no way I would be where I am today if it were not for the GI Bill®. I could never afford to go to school on my own. I come from a family who doesn’t have a lot of money. The GI Bill® allowed me to go to Fortis Institute for Medical Assisting, graduate with honors, become Certified, obtain a position as a Medical Assistant and eventually return to Fortis Institute as an instructor helping others to succeed.
My name is James Powell and I am a veteran. My experience here at Lincoln Tech has been an interesting and good learning experience for the most part. The instructors are very knowledgeable. Coming from being a Naval Electrician to learning to become a Commercial Electrician has been a tough transition. The Instructors have been instrumental in helping me learn the rules and regulations on the civilian side.

It has been a big transition for me here at Lincoln Tech coming from a Naval background. The Veteran Group that meets at Lincoln Tech monthly has helped with this transition. It gives the Veterans the opportunity to network. Lincoln Tech has done an amazing job at providing resources to the Veterans to support their goal in finishing their programs. The overall staff at Lincoln Tech has been extremely helpful and very informative. There are endless amounts of opportunities when you graduate and I plan to take advantage of them.
Carvel Barnett

Fortis Institute
Wayne, New Jersey

I joined the US Army to serve my country and to help others. My tour of duty took me to Iraq, Poland, Germany, Afghanistan, and more. I served in combat, achieving the rank of Sargent E-5 and was awarded with eight medals and numerous commendations. Upon receiving my honorable discharge after 15 years of service, I enlisted in the New Jersey National Guard.

Needing a skill set to begin life as a civilian, I enrolled in Fortis Institute’s HVAC-R Technician program. In the Army, I drove in many military trucks that had non-functioning AC units. Speaking with the vehicle AC mechanics I saw the importance of air conditioning, especially in certain climates. The HVAC field is a solid profession, serving needs in every community. When Graduating the HVAC-R program, I continued at Fortis, in the Electrical Systems Technician program, which I now attend.

This added course is providing me with the overlap training needed to master skills for both Electrical and HVAC work, allowing me to gain the best possible employment in a solid career to support my family while serving my community. Fortis provides excellent education and training which is why I chose to continue here for the EST course. My Career Advisor at Fortis has already connected me with employers who are willing to hire me when I graduate later this year and I look forward to applying my skills and education in this field.

I believe Trade Schools are an important option for military veterans to gain the skills needed for a career. After spending time in war zones and combat, a hands-on program that concentrates on a particular skill is solid and focused. This training, coupled with the dedication, discipline and leadership skills gained in the Army will enable me and other veterans to move into a successful future.
Thank you ACI Medical and Dental School for assisting my wife and me with beginning a new career in the medical field. After spending 33 years in the US Army, my wife and I were able to take advantage of the post 911 GI Bill® while attending a school that is clearly military friendly. The unique environment ACI provides is fostered by expert, professional and diligent staff members. Both my wife and I found our experiences to be exemplary of an inspirational environment in which you can successfully achieve the school’s mission of providing post-secondary education to individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and all levels of work experience. Because of the education we received from ACI, Shari was able to find employment through Hackensack Meridian Health as a Medical Assistant; and my attendance in the Medical and Dental Administrative Assistant program increased my appetite for more education. Therefore, I also attended the Medical Assistant Program in the hopes of learning more about the medical field in order to apply my knowledge and experience in either capacity while earning credentials in the field.
My name is Romeo Smith and I am a veteran of two foreign wars. After my military service requirement came to an end in 2009, I sought out numerous education opportunities and was unsuccessful with utilizing only the traditional schooling methods. After attaining a bachelor’s degree in business administration, I still found it challenging to acquire employment which offered me the necessary growth needed to sustain my needs long term.

I decided to attend Lincoln Tech in South Plainfield, New Jersey utilizing vocational rehabilitation; a benefit offered to service-connected disabled veterans by the United States Department of Veteran’s Affairs. After just two weeks of attending the heavy diesel technician course, I have already received leads, and have been in contact with recruiters from various Fortune 500 companies eager to fill their growing demand for trained technicians in various automotive fields.

While attending traditional colleges, I didn’t feel as marketable as I do since attending Lincoln Tech. I look forward to stepping out into the workforce upon completion of my training and exercising the trade I am currently learning. Furthermore, I look forward to some day opening my own business; a privilege easier allotted by the student friendly curriculum offered by Lincoln Tech.
Jose A. Palomino

Lincoln Technical Institute
Mahwah, New Jersey

As an active member of Army National Guard with 24 years of service, Lincoln Tech is giving me an opportunity of learning skills for the electrical trade, which consist of installing telecommunications, security and fire systems. These critical skills will prepare me for job opportunities in this fast-growing economy within the construction, manufacturing or electrical industries.

Samoa Henry

Fortis Institute
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

I joined the USMC on August 21, 2006 and completed a tour of duty operation Iraq. I joined the USMC in order to increase my self-discipline and knowledge and skills. I also participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2009 and came back state side 2010. I participated with the US Army and African Army in night vision training and motor vehicle operation skills in Share of the Core in 2011 in South Africa.

After fulfilling my contract in Africa for 6 months, I decided to enroll at Fortis for HVAC. So far, I love my training in HVAC. It is very new to me but I am confident that I will be able to use my discipline in order to succeed in my studies.
Michael C. Yodice
Lincoln Technical Institute
Mahwah, New Jersey

I served 4 years as a Corporal in the Marine Corps as a Small Arms Technician with 9th ESB & 1st Maintenance BN. My efforts assisted in supporting various units. As an Armorer I was trained with precision tools and working with my hands. College was never for me, as I would prefer to build and fix things. Lincoln Tech is the perfect fit for myself, as it is for many veterans. Skilled labor occupations are in need of new young dedicated men and women to keep this nation running.

Tyler Shaw
Lincoln Technical Institute
Mahwah, New Jersey

I served 4 years as a Corporal in the Marine Corps infantry with 2nd Battalion 6th Marines. I did two deployments with the 26th MEU supporting various operations from 2015-2018. As a rifleman, I used my hands for everything. College was never for me, as I would prefer to build and fix with my hands. Trade school was the perfect fit for me, as it was for many other of my brothers I served with. Trades are in desperate need for the next generation, my generation, to keep this country that we fought to defend, running.
Coming to Lincoln Tech has enabled me to pursue the career that I wanted for myself after separating from the military. I was not able to become a mechanic for the Air Force because when I joined there weren’t any mechanic jobs available. Now that I am separated from the military, Lincoln Tech is helping me fulfill my goals of one day becoming a mechanic. Without being able to attend a school like this I would not be able to receive the hands-on specific training that I need to be a successful mechanic. There is no substitute for the knowledge, skill and experience that I am receiving from attending a trade school. Lincoln Tech is enabling me to be truly happy in my career and to love what I do. I am blessed to be able to tell my kids that I love my job and encourage them to pursue whatever career will one day make them happy. I don’t feel that I would have that opportunity if I were not able to pursue my career of choice at Lincoln Tech.
My name is Augustus and I was a Nuclear Weapons Technician in the United States Air Force. I served for 6 years at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, NM. My training led me to become a Nuclear Weapons Technician where perfection was mandated.

While my experience was very rewarding, my skills were extremely specific and did not translate well to civilian employment. I tried many jobs after leaving the Air Force, but did not find the stability I was looking for. I decided to use my G.I. Bill because the skills I built in the military translated well to protocols in the medical field.

One of the most challenging aspects I experienced returning to college, was the adjustment from the military method of instruction. In the military, instruction was done in a prescribed format with constant repetition. I preformed tasks that were extremely important and required strict adherence to established protocols. When I entered Carrington College, I was challenged to relearn critical thinking skills which I believe will enhance my performance in the civilian workforce.

Relearning to be a student has been a difficult and stressful experience however, my advice to other veterans is stick it out because the ends justify the means. The life I will be able to provide to my family is my constant focus and motivation.
My name is Kyle and I am a Veteran of the New Mexico Army National Guard. As a member of the Army National Guard, I was a medic responsible for a platoon of soldiers. During my service, I participated in Military Police training which lead to a deployment to Egypt for a peacekeeping mission. I have always had a strong desire to help people. Throughout my experience with the military, I knew furthering my education in a healthcare field was going to happen. I began looking at nursing school in 2009 and started taking pre-requisite classes. Upon completion of my military service in 2016, I began searching for a nursing school to attend. I was referred to Carrington College by a former Carrington College graduate. When I spoke to the enrollment representative, I began the process of preparing to attend classes using my VA funding. I took my entrance exams and enrolled in the nursing program. Since beginning classes in January of 2019, I have felt the support of everyone at Carrington College, from my small class sizes, to the availability of my instructors, and the helpful nature of the online instructors. I feel at ease as a student knowing I will be supported. As a student at Carrington College, I feel Carrington College does everything possible to set students up for success. I know my journey has just begun with Carrington College and I am excited for the future.
When I was getting out of the Marines, I had thoughts of only working menial jobs; working at a gas station was my biggest dream. It was when I ran into a fellow veteran and he mentioned air conditioning repair. So I got into it and a trade school has helped so much in my life.

I grew up without a father in my household. Other than a hammer, I could not tell you a thing about tools or fixing and repairing machines that would cost someone hundreds.

I have found my passion and a reason to not just settle for a minimum wage job. Because of trade schools and benefits allowing me to attend, I will be able to take care of and support my family.

Please continue to allow other veterans, like myself, to make something of themselves after serving their country. I am forever grateful to the VA and their support. I appreciate what a positive spin on my life trade school has been and it can be the same outcome for our fellow veterans.
My name is Michael and I am a veteran of the United States Navy. When I was in the United States Navy, I was an Aviation Machinist Mate (Jet Engine Mechanic). Unfortunately, in the Civilian world, getting this job was extremely hard. I saw a commercial from ASA College and decided to visit the campus to gain more information about the programs. The admissions representative gave me a well detailed description of all the available programs, and from there I made my decision to enroll.

My experience at ASA College was wonderful. I excelled in all my classes and graduated with Honors. I believe ASA College is great for Veterans trying to get back on their feet. The institution provides a variety of interesting courses that will help them obtain their personal and professional goals. With a degree from ASA College, there are more opportunities to find employment in the civilian job market. My degree has enabled me as an Externship Coordinator, to help students, by providing them the necessary training to be successful in their career.

Currently, I reside in New York, where there are a large number of veterans who could use the wonderful services of ASA College. I highly recommend to veterans who want to pursue their education to apply to a college such as ASA. They will get a great education along with the necessary training needed to do well in their career. Also, after graduation they will have lifetime placement assistance from their great Career Services Department.
I walked into that Bryant & Stratton College campus, and I never left. My journey started in Puerto Rico, where I was born and attended the University of Puerto Rico. From there, I spent 10 years in the military, including deployments to South Korea and Germany. A couple of years ago, my three young children and I decided to move back to Rochester.

I fondly remember the day I walked into the Rochester Campus for the first time. When I walked through those doors my life changed completely. I owe a lot of my success to Bryant & Stratton College. I feel like they boost me. I started my first semester a month later. The fact that Bryant & Stratton accepted AARTS credits – three credits for completing basic training – was a big plus.

From the moment I sat down with the Academic Advisor and the financial aid people, they were there for me whenever I needed them. They’re always there to help and assist with anything that I need – no matter what. I fell in love with business at Bryant & Stratton College, and received my associate degree. I can’t wait to see where my future will go.
I joined the military because of 9/11. My mother was working at a bank close to the twin towers the day the planes crashed. Being born in New York and raised down south in North Carolina, she has been my motivation to continue my career as a soldier in the United States Army and obtain my degree in Criminal Justice.

Instead of attending other colleges for 2 ½ years or more, I chose ASA College because of their fast track 18 months Occupational Studies degree programs. This type of college is great for veterans. If they are active they can attend college and still achieve their goals without having an issue with the military.

ASA College accommodates your needs to the fullest. During my studies, I build a strong relationship with all my Criminal Justice Professors. With their help and support, I manage to stay on top with A’s and B’s. I maintained High Honor Roll status for all consecutive semesters. My experience at ASA was and still is astonishing, surprising as well as staggering.

For all veterans, I leave you with this quote from Thomas A. Edison. “Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try one more time.” Never give up. As Veterans we have already accomplished so much in life. I am happy to have found a learning community where, I can explore, learn and excel in the career path I chose.
Ricardo Lawson

Apex Technical School
Long Island City, New York

I am a current Apex Technical School student. I am working on my third field of study, which is Electrical. I previously studied in the Construction and AC and Refrigeration programs.

Apex has enlightened my knowledge in three important fields that will give me the opportunity to provide for my wife and kids. I am really confident that I will be able to start my career right after graduation. I was an Aviation Boatswain Mate Fuels (ABF) in the US NAVY on the USS Ronald Reagan CVN 76, which does not exactly translate into the civilian work sector.

Apex gave me the opportunity to enhance my love and knowledge to work with my hands to build and repair. I know the opportunity to attend Apex has benefited a lot of Veterans and I hope that the opportunity continues to be there and help Veterans who have been trained in fields that do not translated into the civilian sector.
I served my country by enlisting in the United States Navy in September of 2001. My title was Support Equipment Technician, and my duties included hydraulics maintenance, electrical service, compressor unit repair, etc. I received an Honorable Discharge and started looking for a school to help me transition. My goal was to find training in the automotive field similar to what I was doing in the Navy. I did extensive research and found that Lincoln Tech in Queens offered the program I was seeking. I enrolled in Lincoln Tech’s Automotive program and started classes in September 2012. My experience while in school was beyond my expectations. The instructors were engaging and knowledgeable. The staff, always accommodating and helpful. The availability of resources on campus made it easy to attend classes. I graduated with a 4.0 GPA and 100% attendance. As I neared the end of the program, the Career Services department assisted me with finding employment. I interviewed with many automotive employers on campus. My golden opportunity came when Lincoln Tech set up an interview with Con Edison for a Fleet Supervisor Position. I was hired. My experience at Lincoln Tech in Queens was great. Once I graduated, my husband, who also served in the Navy, enrolled in Lincoln Tech’s automotive program.

I am a wife, mother and veteran, and my decision to attend Lincoln Tech was the best choice for me and my family.
I came from a big family; my parents had a lot of mouths to feed. But growing up in relative poverty and challenging living conditions propelled me to bigger things. I went to a high school that was attended by a lot of wealthy kids, and that propelled me even further. These experiences inspired me to just want more out of life. To be self-made.

That desire for a challenge led me to the Marine Corps. The recruiters didn’t sugarcoat how difficult it would be – and it was. But in the back of my mind I knew I was accumulating money for my tuition via the GI Bill®, and my goal was to get out of the military and enter school immediately. The local university put me on a yearlong waiting list, but I just couldn’t wait.

And that’s when Bryant & Stratton College entered my life and changed everything for me. I ended up getting more than just a business degree. I got a valuable experience learning the business world - a personal experience that I think would benefit a lot of people from the military. Bryant & Stratton can really guide veterans in civilian life, giving them real-world experience and support. Now with my business degree I’m planning on re-entering the military as an officer – a captain or lieutenant. And my ultimate goal is to become a lawyer for troubled youth and get them back on track. They need all the help they can get.

Before I enrolled, I drove by Bryant & Stratton College’s campus in Rochester, New York, all the time because I lived down the street. But this time I happened to be shopping for colleges and decided to stop in – the American flag outside caught my attention, since I’d been in the military.
My name is Victor Gascot and I am a Navy Veteran that is currently attending Apex Technical School of Long Island City, New York. I am writing in reference to why this school has been essential for me in my transition from the Navy to civilian life. The military has given me many resources to ensure success once I got out of the military. But sometimes, military jobs just don't translate to all sectors.

Apex has given me the opportunity to be able to stand out even more with their advanced electrical program. The staff also made it a pleasure and a smooth transition for me, ensuring everything was taken care of from paperwork to keeping me well informed every step of the way. They really do go above and beyond for their veterans at Apex from start to finish and this is why I feel that Apex is not only great for me but for all veterans.
Ronald Headen
ASA College
New York, New York

I chose ASA College because it offered a program I was very interested in, Medical Billing. My experience at the college was great. I always looked forward to going to classes and I didn’t mind commuting each and every day from Pennsylvania, even though it’s 90 minutes away from NYC. I enjoyed all of my courses as they were taught by experienced professionals. The college experience made me feel like I was already working in the field.

ASA is great for veterans, and I felt privileged to meet other veterans who enjoyed the experience at the college as well. During our studies we were able to learn new skills and enhance our current skills. The hands-on training we received allowed us to be more competitive and extremely marketable in the current job market.

ASA changed my life! Now more than ever, I understand the value of quality education. I am now in a position to start a new career where I can help patients receive accurate billing rather than erroneous ones and share my knowledge with others.

I proudly encourage other veterans to continue their education at ASA College. This is the place to get excellent service, strong support, quality education and hands-on training.
Chris Garcia

Apex Technical School
Long Island City, New York

I served in the United States Marine Corps from 2013-2017. During my 2017 serves, I didn’t really know what to do or what I was going to do with my life after the service.

I did do two semesters of college before I realized there was not enough time on my GI Bill® to get my bachelors degree. I knew then that I would be wasting my time on something that later on I might have to pay out of my pocket for.

So I went on Google to do some searching as to what my options were with the time I had available and Apex Technical School came up. I signed up for a course and it only took seven months compared to four years in school. I actually learned something here and it’s something I can make a good living from.

I am now taking a second course and it’s definitely going to make an impact on the quality of my life.
Bob Peters
National Tractor Trailer School
Liverpool, New York

I was retiring out of the Military after 27 years and wanted to go into the Truck Driving industry and that’s when I went to the National Tractor Trailer School (NTTS) to obtain my Commercial Drivers License (CDL). I attended NTTS on the 5 week program and am very glad I did, the amount of knowledge that you receive while attending the course is more than I thought about when going in to the industry.

Once I graduated I went to work for NY State DOT for winter highway maintenance and then I have work a couple different jobs driving CDL trucks. The training I received has helped me in every trucking profession that I have held since I graduated.

Elijah Parkinson
Apex Technical School
Long Island City, New York

I, Elijah Parkinson, served in the United States Navy from August 30, 2009 to August 31, 2013. I was assigned to the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln and served honorably.

When I separated, I was unsure of what I wanted to do going forward. My father suggested I learn a trade that would benefit me for the rest of my life.

Trades like electrical, plumbing, etc. are a needed skill. When someone needs a problem fixed in their home, I want to be the person they call.

I have completed two programs at Apex Technical School and I feel as if I have a new focus and drive. I believe it will also do the same for future veterans.
John Marlett is an Army Veteran who served from 2006-2010. John joined the military to follow in his family footsteps as he comes from a background of military members. John was injured in Iraq in 2009 and was medically discharged in 2010. When he returned home, he worked on his family farm for a number of years but found he had a greater calling. He wanted to be out on the road as a driver. After researching driving schools John visited NTTS in 2018. John liked the training program NTTS offered and after talking with his wife he enrolled in an 18 week, 602 hour course. After graduating from the school and with the help of the school’s placement department, John went to work for Perry’s Ice Cream in Akron, NY. Being a driver gives him the freedom to work during the week and be home with his family on the weekends. John is grateful for the training he received here that gave him the skills he needed to pursue a successful career as a tractor trailer driver and is now able to comfortably support his family while doing something he loves to do. John referred to the instructors as top notch and a big part of his success. John resides in Bliss, NY with his family.
Nicolas Gutierrez

Apex Technical School
Long Island City, New York

After separating from the Marine Corp, July 2015, I had a sales job lined up. I thought it would be enough to survive off of until I was able to relocate back east.

While enlisted in the service, I served as an electrician. I heard of a school in New York City that specialized in technical training.

The skills I picked up from my time in the military and at Apex Technical School combined, have prepared me for a career in the electrical field.

Since Apex has other trades available, I was able to take another course, utilizing my GI Bill®.

Through Apex, I was able to get my OSHA 10, OSHA 30 and my EPA licenses. All of which, if I persuade on my, I would have not been able to afford. Apex also has a job placement department to assist you with employment. These are just some of the program set in place by Apex to give there veteran and other students a real opportunity in the labor market.
Lance Hollenstein

Apex Technical School
Long Island City, New York

I have never been a college person. I wanted to better myself after my separation from the military and trade school was a perfect fit for me. Apex is a “blue collar school” for a “blue collar person.”

The GI Bill® shouldn’t be just for people that want to attend a traditional college. In my opinion, that’s not fair. Not everyone is cut out for traditional college. I should be able to use the benefits I rightfully earned (14 years in the Army) in a way that better fits my needs and Apex Technical School fits me perfectly!
Andrew Skaggs
MyComputerCareer
Raleigh, North Carolina

Two years ago, a veteran at MyComputerCareer student, Andrew Skaggs was involved in a serious car accident that nearly cost him his life. Although he’s now recovered from his injuries, he has physical limitations that redefined his life goals and dreams.

When reevaluating what to do with his life, Andrew decided to take a step into the I.T. field. He knew that he could make a successful career for himself, even though his physical strength is now limited. Not to mention, his wife, Victoria, had already made the transition to the I.T. world with MyComputerCareer, too!

In 2017, Victoria successfully gained several certifications through our ITSA program, and went on to land a great new I.T. position! Now, Andrew has graduated the ITSA program as well, but he didn’t stop there! He’s working hard to finish our ITSS program, which he will have completed by the beginning of June!
My name is Cammy and I am currently working as a nursing instructor for Fortis College. However, my story did not begin here. I joined the military straight out of high school and then spent the next 10 years in various countries around the world. I have 4 children, three grandchildren, and a spouse of 34 years. I did not go to college after settling back in the states but instead worked on educating my 4 children at home and raising my family.

As I matured, I felt a compassion and calling to work in healthcare. At first, I worked as a home health aide but quickly decided that I wanted more to do with taking care of my patients and growing in the healthcare field. I was introduced to Fortis College by none other than the children of my friend who went there to get their nursing degrees. I began as a licensed practical nurse but again began to feel the desire to know more about patient care so I went back to Fortis College to get my ADN. Once I had my ADN, the world of nursing and its opportunities began to open even further for me. While working as a hospital nurse I decided to continue working on my degrees and obtained my BSN in nursing, then my MSN in nursing education.

I am currently working on my Doctorate in Higher Education and Adult Learning. This all began with my humble beginning at Fortis College and I am very grateful to my instructors and fellow classmates who came alongside me on this journey of discovery and growth.
Angelique Ashley

Daymar College
Columbus, Ohio

Angelique, a former SSG of the United States Army, received her Associates of Business Management degree from Daymar College at the Columbus, OH campus. Throughout the time I have known Angelique, I witness her sharing the same comrade with her cohort that I knew while serving myself.

Although she has graduated, Angelique continues to support Daymar students. One student was in a major motorcycle accident last year. Angelique accompanied me to hospital and rehabilitation visits. Additionally, she continues to mentor the student, caring for her young four year old daughter so the student can attend classes. Angelique is known by the student’s daughter as “Auntie Mama”. Her mentorship and support to the student resulted in the student’s successfully graduating on March 25th. This student will also walk in the graduation ceremony on September 24, 2019, which would not have been possible without Angelique selfless support.

Students at Daymar College must complete an internship at a host organization. Angelique went above expectations during her internship. In her role of office manager, she provided the host organization with tools to effectively run the office, such as an Excel spreadsheet for payroll, budgeting and office supplies.

Angelique can currently be depended on to attend and volunteer her help at Daymar College events, such as leading graduating students, faculty and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance at the 2018 graduating ceremony. I personally plan to keep her engaged as the model student and graduate that she remains. Earlier this year, Daymar College dedicated a bench outside the entrance of the college in honor of Veterans at Daymar College. I am very proud to be associated as a fellow Army veteran with Angelique and look forward to a continued, rewarding friendship for years to come.
All my life I’ve had the dream of joining the military. And I knew I would one day. But I was made to promise to go to college first. And after 3 grueling years I knew I was not meant for college, and people were finally starting to see the same things as me. So, in 2014 I enlisted in the Ohio National Guard with the expectations of finishing my bachelors degree. In 2015 I was deployed. Upon coming home I had no job to return to and my fiancé was unemployed because she was a full time student, so skipping college again I jumped straight in to finding work. A few short months later bouncing around from job to job, married and a baby on the way, I started to panic. Not sure how I was going to support a family, not seeing any potential careers in the mindless jobs I was doing, and not making any advancements work-wise. One day my wife, very supportively suggested I look at Fortis College for a trade. Reluctantly I agreed, though the thought of going back to school made me nervous. On my tour I fell in love with the HVAC work shop, thinking back to when I was a kid building things and fixing them. I knew nothing about this trade and was excited to learn more. After meeting the program director and hearing more about the program itself I decided then that I was enrolling in Fortis College.

Fortis put forth an amazing curriculum for students like me that enjoy working with their hands. The instructors were very friendly and spent quality time with students if needed. This was nothing like my previous college experiences. Not long after graduating from Fortis in the HVAC trade I landed an apprenticeship with an amazing company. Now my wife and I have purchased our first home with our son and dog as I continue to advance my learning in the field every day. If you enjoy learning with your hands, good quality education, and the occasional story from real world experiences, then I can recommend Fortis College to everyone.
I was working at a factory with no career improvements in sight. Throughout my life, I have always been the type of person that likes to fix things. The I.T. field has always been an interest of mine. That’s why it was perfect timing when I heard about MyComputerCareer on the radio. I choose MyCC because they accepted the GI Bill®. I previously attended ITT-Tech before they went bankrupt. I was told that none of those credits would transfer and I would have to start my schooling all over.

Thankfully, MyCC gives me the tools I need to succeed WITHOUT going to college for years! MyComputerCareer has truly given me a future to look forward to, an actual career/trade that I can spend the rest of my life growing into. NO MORE FACTORY JOBS!! I look forward to graduating and finding a great job that will support me! I can’t wait until my next chapter begins!
After spending four years as an Army medic, I knew that I wanted to further my education. I understood that nursing schools were incredibly competitive for acceptance, but considering my prior experience I believed I would be a preferred candidate. After all, I had proven my medical competence as a service member. What I found was the opposite. My experience meant absolutely nothing as far as admissions. After three years of waitlists and filled classes I finally found Fortis College.

Fortis College in Centerville, Ohio has been more than I could have ever dreamed for. Firstly, the school is ACEN accredited, which is increasingly important to today’s employers. When I visited the school for the first time every person I met made me feel welcome. They took the time to assess my needs and ensure that they were my best option. What I have never felt was that I was simply a paycheck to them. I have felt since day one that they have nothing but my absolute best in mind when decisions are made. Because classes start every quarter, I was able to enroll and start classes less than 90 days later.

Fortis hasn’t just improved my life, but it has given me hope for my future. Because of Fortis, my children will be able to have opportunities that I was not able to have. While they are giving me a career, they are giving my family a life, and there is nothing more important in the world than that.
Recently I’ve had some pretty life altering incidents in my life. I needed a change and was praying for a sign. A VA representative informed me that I had some time left on my Montgomery GI Bill® and although I had graduated college I decided to find a way to use it. I came across Fortis just by chance, but it still peaked my interest.

I’ve had some scary encounters in my career in the military as well as a civilian. In 2004 I nearly lost my life while serving our country while deployed to Fallujah. I was in a wheelchair for 2 years and have undergone 38 surgical procedures. Since leaving the military I have chosen dangerous career paths and work on jobs where I knew it was possible I might not come home one night. Recently my son expressed that he was worried I could get hurt or worse while escorting a prisoner or picking up someone that jumped their bond. That broke my heart and I decided I needed to make a change for my kids especially now that I’m recently divorced and a single mother.

Fortis provided me the opportunity to go full force while being totally out of my comfort zone. I chose a career path to work in the dental career field. Quite possibly I could use this as a stepping stone to getting into forensic dentistry and at least I can still have the best of both worlds. A career where I can come home safely to my 2 children every day and still work with law enforcement.
My name is Brady, and I have spent the last 4 years in the army. One of the biggest struggles as a service member was figuring out what is next after leaving the military. Fortis College has helped me achieve my goals after service and beyond. Not only did they assist in my job search their prompt service helped me get on the right track quick. Now with only 2 weeks left until graduation, I have a steady full-time job and because of a group of instructors who care about not only my success but my future as well. Without these dedicated faculty members I don’t know how I could have found my next Career after the military. Because at Fortis it’s not a job they’ve helped me get it’s a career!
Christopher McConnell

Fortis College
Centerville, Ohio

From the moment I walked in the front doors at Fortis College-Centerville, I was happily greeted with enthusiasm and energy. The faculty and staff are so great here. From the instructors to the president, they care about every student and want them to succeed. I chose Fortis College for a number of reasons.

The first is because they accepted my Montgomery G.I. Bill. The Montgomery G.I. Bill has been a blessing to me because it has saved me a TON of money. I spent 5 years in the United States Navy from 2002-2007. I did one tour to Iraq and Afghanistan in 2005-2006. I didn’t know what I was going to do once I got out of the military. I chose to do pest control and maintenance for almost 15 years. I then started to look at colleges for a nursing degree.

Another reason I chose Fortis College is because they have an ADN nursing program. This was very important to me because I did not have to get my LPN license first.

Thirdly, I chose Fortis College because of their accreditation and passing rates for the NCLEX exam. The accreditation goes a long way when looking for a job in the future.
I served in the Oklahoma Army National Guard as a light wheeled vehicle mechanic for 6 years from 2011-2017. This included a 7-month deployment to Afghanistan in 2013. Being in the military taught me so much, including honesty and integrity. I learned how important it is to document everything which I now apply to my career in the medical field! I also learned about patience and perseverance. The military shaped and molded me into the strong independent women I am today. This goes to show how education can inspire and grow someone who is willing to put in the effort.

I have a passion for learning and I knew that I wanted to be educated to work in the medical field. At Community Care College, I was able to get an education and achieve my dream of having a career in the medical field. While in school, I learned about Anatomy, Medical Terminology, Phlebotomy, and other important concepts. I devoted myself to my education because I was able to incorporate the OK National Guard concepts of honesty, integrity, patience, and perseverance. Without my GI Bill®, I would have never been able to attend college. Furthering my education was the best career choice I could have made. Today, I serve the patients of Oklahoma Cancer Specialists and Research Institute (OCSRI) as a Certified Medical Assistant. My future is bright and I am so glad I had the opportunity to attend Community Care College!
Sean Moulder’s story begins like many others in America: he graduated high school and joined the army. Upon returning home from two tours in Iraq he enrolled and graduated with a Bachelor in Criminal Justice from the University of Oklahoma. Moulder’s plan was to join the police force but was ultimately unable to due to medical challenges. Moulder needed a new field that would entice his troubleshooting skills. Moulder decided to continue his education, but this time, with a hands-on training program that would open doors to work in the HVAC field. Moulder felt that the lab environment at WTI helped him “get a feel for the real world of HVAC.” Moulder graduated from Tulsa’s Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Technology program in December 2018 and shortly after was employed at QuikTrip as a Maintenance Technician. QuikTrip has since promoted him to an Equipment Technician. Moulder said: “I didn’t have any experience coming in. My instructors helped me every step of the way and I owe a lot to them.” WTI Tulsa instructors helped him study and earn the EPA Universal and NATE certifications while at WTI. Now, Moulder is working on his Journeyman’s license and feels a great “sense of accomplishment.”
I chose Community Care College because a four-year college just wasn’t ideal for my life. After initial training for the National Guard, I wanted something that would get me working in a field that I loved quickly. I chose to attend the Surgical Technologist program at Community Care College before my tour was even over. As soon as I walked into the lab, I started to get excited about my career opportunities. I fell in love with the idea of being able to be right there with the surgeon helping people.

I am a sergeant in the Oklahoma National Guard. My military occupational specialty (MOS) is a combat medic. My responsibility is to be the first line of care to the soldiers. I have been in the Oklahoma National Guard for 4 years, with one nine-month deployment to Kabul, Afghanistan. I’ve always wanted to help people, mainly in healthcare. Joining the military as a medic is the best thing I could have ever done with my life. Now that my job in the Guard isn’t my full-time career, I am grateful that I chose to become a surgical technologist. I am able to smoothly transfer my skills and knowledge to my career as a surgical technologist in civilian life. Working in surgery is what I love to do and I thrive on being a part of a small, but very important, team. I see myself sticking with this career for a very long time.”
David Jones Jr.

Wichita Technical Institute
Tulsa, Oklahoma

David Jones Jr. joined the military as the Gulf War broke out and served his country faithfully for six years. Jones service brought him to Somalia and Rwanda. Upon his discharge, Jones wanted to dedicate himself to building a new career and had heard positive recommendations about Tulsa’s WTI HVAC program. In addition to hands-on training in the field Jones was interested in the flexible hours available to him as a student. Jones graduated WTI in December of 2018 and said, “without the support from WTI, I would not be in this position today. I didn’t have any knowledge of HVAC when I started.” He earned the EPA Universal, NATE, and Building Science Principles certifications while at WTI. Career Services created a resume that highlighted his level of training/certifications and helped him become employed at Asher’s Commercial Refrigeration after graduation. Since then, Jones has found HVAC work at QuikTrip and is considering relocating to Galveston, TX with two job offers already in hand. He is also working towards earning his Journeyman’s License. He most valued WTI instructors who were always ready to answer questions, Career Services for constantly checking in with him, and Financial Aid who worked with him in times of need. Jones’ dedication to our country is now seen in his contribution to communities with HVAC work.
I am a veteran of the United States Army. After retiring from the Service, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. I enjoyed serving my nation and community but didn’t know what kind of career I wanted in civilian life. Serving my community is such a big part of who I am and through the Fitness and Health Trainer program, I get to do just that. Physical fitness is a cornerstone of military life and combat readiness. I loved conducting fitness training with my brothers and sisters in arms and I realized that I could build on that experience through the fitness industry.

The admissions staff was extremely helpful with the enrollment process, ensuring that I received every benefit that I was eligible for. This included a Veterans’ Scholarship from the college itself. The entire Community Care College staff is amazing and truly cares about the students that they serve. The curriculum is fast paced, but the small class size ensured that I received plenty of training and one on one instruction when needed. The Health and Fitness Trainer program not only covers the fitness concepts utilized by the military, sports organizations and many other agencies, but they dive into the science behind those concepts. When you are close to graduating, the Career Services Center will help you prepare for your next step. I really enjoyed attending Community Care College and I appreciate the effort they put in to help me get started in my new career.
Family is the most important thing in my life. My older sister graduated from Triangle Tech while I was working dead end jobs and living paycheck to paycheck. She talked to my nephew and I about going back to school to learn a trade which I was first hesitant about due to financial reasons. After seeing her success in her career field she inspired me to try harder to achieve my goals as well. I chose to learn electrical because I find electricity is at the heart of the modern world and I know no matter where I end up, anywhere in the world, there’s going to be electricity and for me a potential place of employment.

At first, my nephew, sister and I talked about potentially flipping houses for a living after learning the electrical trade, but I’m now in my third semester and I’ve learned so much more than I ever imagined I would here. The instructors are one of the absolute best parts of the school, each coming from a different walk of life in the electrical trade. They’ve mentored me to become motivated enough and believe that I can achieve even more than I originally thought possible. Flipping houses now may just be something I may do on the side while working with transformers or PLC’s. The career guidance at the school is going to help me find my dream job that’ll enable me to put my fiancé through college, buy a house, and some day start a family of our own. My name is Christopher Russo and this October 2019 I will be a Triangle Tech Graduate.
Eva Gordy-Butler
All State Career School
Essington, Pennsylvania

Eva Gordy-Butler joined the United States Army in July of 2015. She always had the dream of furthering her education. So after she finished High School in June of 2013, Eva attended Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, but was unable to finish due to her financial situation.

Eva found herself back home and now looking for employment. Eva began her job with Elwyn a non-profit organization that is internationally recognized as a human service provider for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as physical, medical, emotional, and behavioral health challenges. Working here is where Eva realized that healthcare is the path she wanted to take. So Eva joined the United States Army in order to accomplish her goal.

Eva would soon find herself following her older sister and brother who both attended All-State Career School in Essington, PA to become medical assistants. Eva is the third of the family to attend the medical assistant program and immediately start their career within great medical facilities.

Eva started the medical assistant program on October 16, 2017 and graduated on July 1, 2018. On August 13, 2018, Eva began her career as a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant with the prestigious Abramson Cancer Center at University of Pennsylvania. Here is where her love of people and caring personality helps her bring comfort too many. We are very proud of her accomplishment and look forward to seeing where her career takes her.
After being honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, I set out to find work and continue my education. I quickly found that the years of training, certifications, and experience in Expeditionary Airfields & Aircraft Recovery were not readily transferable into any civilian job market and almost all of the college credits I had accumulated in service only counted towards electives. Researching the local schools and universities, I was unimpressed with their course descriptions. They either required too much or offered too little. Working a dead-end factory job, I was accepted by a local well-known University for engineering. Within weeks, I knew that program and the entire university atmosphere was not for me. I felt undervalued and trapped.

My uncle, a graduate of Diesel & Heavy Equipment Repair Technology, suggested New Castle School of Trades. I wish I had listened sooner. After having completed Industrial Maintenance with Wind and Solar Technology and returning for Electrical Technology, my experience with NCST has been nothing short of outstanding. The programs are fast-paced, each day building on the last without any unnecessary fluff. The instructors are deeply experienced, professional, and invested in students’ success. The training gives students exactly the skills needed to fill vital jobs, right now. The skilled trades gap facing our country right now is reaching a boiling point. The school regularly coordinates with employers to improve its course content, keeping the training relevant. For these reasons, and many more, NCST is the right place for me and my G.I. Bill.
Eva Gordy-Butler joined the United States Army in July of 2015. She always had the dream of furthering her education. So after she finished High School in June of 2013, Eva attended Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, but was unable to finish due to her financial situation.

Eva found herself back home and now looking for employment. Eva began her job with Elwyn a non-profit organization that is internationally recognized as a human service provider for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as physical, medical, emotional, and behavioral health challenges. Working here is where Eva realized that healthcare is the path she wanted to take. So Eva joined the United States Army in order to accomplish her goal.

Eva would soon find herself following her older sister and brother who both attended All-State Career School in Essington, PA to become medical assistants. Eva is the third of the family to attend the medical assistant program and immediately start their career within great medical facilities.

Eva started the medical assistant program on October 16, 2017 and graduated on July 1, 2018. On August 13, 2018, Eva began her career as a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant with the prestigious Abramson Cancer Center at University of Pennsylvania. Here is where her love of people and caring personality helps her bring comfort too many. We are very proud of her accomplishment and look forward to seeing where her career takes her.
I joined the Army in June of 1995 and retired May of 2016. My primary job in the military was a wheeled vehicle repairer, MOS 91W. I chose that MOS because, at the time, the coal mine construction industry was very active and the need for diesel mechanics was high. Since then, that industry had slowed down the need for construction equipment mechanics had dropped. I decided that I wanted to try a different career and to learn new trades. I looked for a school that was local to the area where I had planned on retiring to. I remembered Triangle Tech from when I was in high school and inquired about the programs they offered. After discussing what programs were available, I chose the electrical program because I had always had an interest in the principles of electricity and how machines worked.

Before I had even left Texas the admissions counselor had everything ready for my enrollment. After 16 months I graduated with a better understanding of not only how things work, but why we do them in accordance with the National Electrical Code. Since I was still eligible for the Post 911 GI Bill® I returned and enrolled in the drafting program. I am currently in my fourth semester and we have covered mechanical and architectural drafting and design. We have developed skills with Computer Aided Drafting software such as Auto CAD, Revit and Inventor. With these two degrees I am looking into careers involving electrical systems design.
My name is Michael Gibson. I served five years in the United States Army Infantry. After returning home and seeking employment I found it difficult to find a good paying job. I left the military having few skill sets and not enough experience to start a good career. Triangle Tech has completely changed that!

I used my G.I. Bill benefits to complete a sixteen month welding and fabrication program. In that short period I was able to walk away with enough knowledge to easily start a successful lifetime career in the field of welding and fabrication. The G.I. Bill has opened many doors for me. It’s made me more valuable to society. I’m sharing my experience with hopes that G.I. Bill benefits will continue to remain available for trade school students in the state of PA.
I am an honorably discharged soldier from the United States Army. Before my enlistment I completed my Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration. After my enlistment I enrolled in the Welding program at New Castle School of Trades utilizing my Post-9/11 GI Bill®. Let me state that other than volunteering for the United States Army, the decision to attend the New Castle School of Trades was the best decision I have made in my life. I also went on and completed my Master’s Degree in Organizational Leadership. I can tell you that my training in welding has supported my career and my family more to this point in my career than my other obtained education. The skilled trades are a very important component of the economy. I currently operate a fabrication business and I cannot find enough skilled tradespeople.

To think taking the ability away from veterans to choose where they want to educate themselves is astonishing. The men and women who have served their country should have the opportunity to choose what is best for them. I would not be where I am at today if it was not for my education at New Castle School of Trades, I hope you strongly reconsider not taking away this opportunity from my fellow brothers and sisters to have the same opportunity I did if they choose to do so.
My name is Shaun and I am a Triangle Tech grad in the electrical program. I chose Triangle Tech’s electrical program because it had everything I needed to take me to the next level in my career without having to take all the classes that I do not need to be a successful electrician. With that being said, I would have never went back to school without having my GI Bill® and the housing allowance that goes along with it. I would not have been able to afford to stop working and pay for school without it. I encourage anyone who was in the military to use their GI Bill® to go back to school and get a degree in a trade or a 4 year degree and better themselves. They have earned the right to use the GI Bill®. Before I used my GI Bill®, I was making $37,440 a year as an electrician. After I used my GI Bill®, I am making $49,500 as an Electrical Instructor.
Joshua Stivers

New Castle School of Trades
New Castle, Pennsylvania

I was in the U.S. Navy as a Seabee for 9 years and earned the rank of BU2 (SCW) before my EOS. I had been on multiple deployments around the world. After getting out of the Navy, I started work for a company that supplied GM Auto Plant and did normal civilian things like getting married and starting a family. Once my wife and I found out we were having a baby, I knew I needed to find a career and not just a job. I looked into many options such as truck driving, construction, etc. I found myself thinking about going back to school. I knew that a traditional 4-year college was not in my best interest so I found myself at New Castle School of Trades. I took a tour of the school and discovered that the machining department looked like something I could do up. Fifteen months later, I had a Specialized Associates Degree in Machinist Technology. After that, I had my first job as a machinist making parts for gas and oil companies.

I found myself wanting to learn more about different trades, so I went back to NCST for the Automotive Program. While I was there a position for an instructor opened up. I was told by my instructor at the time to put my resume in and see what happens. Two weeks after that I was the new instructor for Machinist Technology. I am still taking night classes here for welding.

All of this life changing that I have done would not have been possible without my support from my wife and family, and also the help I get with the Post 911 G.I. Bill or my veteran benefits. I am thankful that I have the opportunity to learn as much as I can.
Hunter Grol

Triangle Tech
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Hunter was in the PA Army National Guard when he was notified of his deployment to Afghanistan. He was on active duty orders working in Ft. Indiantown Gap. After a while he began to realize that a career in the military was not what he wanted. He always thought welding was a cool career and always wanted to receive a college degree and he was blown away at the chance to do both.

He quickly discovered his passion for pipe welding and fabrication. He excelled in the program and had three job offers prior to graduation. He accepted a position with Newport News Shipyard in West Virginia. Here he was offered an opportunity to work on our nation’s naval fleet. He has since left the shipyard and now is a Stationary Engineer. His background and education helped him receive the job that he truly loves. He is also continuing his education in Industrial Technology Management. “I am extremely grateful for every opportunity that has come to me since graduation. None of them would have been available if it was not for the skills and education I received from Triangle Tech.”
Frank served as a rifleman with the 3rd Battalion 2nd Marines from 2005-2009. While he found the work exciting and fulfilling, his time with the infantry left him feeling unprepared for the outside world. He found himself unemployed and needed to gain some marketable skills. He joined the US Marines right out of high school and left with a strong work ethic but needed to polish his resume and gain more skills that would allow him to find a steady career.

It was clear that trades were in high demand and would provide the wages he needed to provide for his wife and two young girls. He enrolled at Triangle Tech in the Welding and Fabrication program and excelled in the theory and the hands on work. His passion for welding landed him a job immediately following graduation. “The skills I learned at Triangle Tech allowed me to gain not just a job but a career.” Frank is currently employed with a local welding company located in Palmerton, PA. There he gets to put all of his hands on skills to use on a daily basis.
On 3/22/19 myself and several other veterans were informed about an idea that is trying to be passed about the GI Bill® earned by every military member. I must say I am very furious at the fact that you are trying to limit veterans to universities and not tech schools. If it was not for Triangle Tech, I don’t know if I would have attempted a large university. Tech schools are important right now, as the baby boomers are retiring and people with skills like welding are needed. For me this 16 month program makes it easier to attend. It’s just like a job and I treat it as such. The instructors have decades of experience and experience is important in the welding field I was an infantry assaultman in the United States Marine Corps, one of the best jobs I’ve ever had but I have nothing to show for it other than my rank and medals I earned. When I got out in June 2016, I found it hard to just get back into a regular job. I wanted something challenging and wanted to start my own business. Welding and Fabrication has always been a passion of mine and now because of my GI Bill® I can finally pursue my dream.

I know many veterans that have used their GI Bill® to better themselves at tech schools after being in the service. By limiting the usage of the GI Bill® to universities for veterans, it makes me angry.

When it all comes down to it. We need to be able to use our GI Bill® for what we want. Some veterans have a hard time with regular jobs coming out of the service and the GI Bill® being accepted at any college allows us to go where its convenient for us. I am on my second semester at Triangle Tech and I enjoy the hands on training, unlike most larger universities. The classes are smaller and allows me for more one on one with the instructor and ask questions. By limiting the US veteran, it’s like a kick in the face.
Billy Corona

Automotive Training Center
Exton, Pennsylvania

Billy Corona is currently a student at Automotive Training Center (ATC) in Exton, PA. Prior to attending ATC, Billy knew that he wanted more out of life than what his environment could provide. He decided to join the military in 2014. After completing his Marine training, Billy made a decision to follow his passion for automobiles and enrolled into the Automotive and Diesel Technology program at ATC. Billy wanted to be successful and have a career where he could support himself and his family.

While attending ATC and gaining new skills, Billy was able to secure a position in the automotive/diesel field with assistance from the Career & Student Services Department. This new position allowed Billy to continue his training at ATC and still make enough money to meet his financial needs. Billy was pleased with his decision to attend ATC because the program allowed him to receive the career training he needed to enter the automotive/diesel field as a technician. Billy appreciated the hands-on training that he received in school and was able to gain additional hands-on experience in his new position as a technician.

In May of 2017, Billy graduated from the Automotive and Diesel Technology program and decided to enroll into the Collision Reconditioning Technology program to further his skills. Billy has done very well in school and will be graduating from the Collision Reconditioning Technology program on April 18, 2019.

Billy is the first member of his family to join the military and also graduate from a post-secondary career school. He knows that the education he received will prepare him for success in the automotive industry. Billy is currently employed with Allan Myers as an automotive/diesel technician. He is doing a great job in his new position and is looking forward to progressing in his new career.
Shorty after his high school graduation, Joseph enrolled in the United States Navy. He was a local area network administrator in the Navy and completed his military service in August 2008.

After working for several years in loss prevention, retail, and as a delivery driver, Joseph decided to go back to school for HVAC. He enrolled at All State Career School in January 2017. Joseph was an outstanding student and finished his HVAC training with a 4.00 grade point average. He also won several awards for having perfect attendance. In February 2018, Joseph was hired as an HVAC installer for Horizon Services. This company is one of the largest HVAC service companies in Pennsylvania. Joseph has done very well with this employer and is still employed with them.
The GI Bill® should not be limited to traditional colleges as some people including myself have chosen to go to a trade school. Not everyone is interested in the traditional college as it does not pertain to what we want to do in our life. I wanted to go to my trade school because I wanted to make a life for myself. I needed a career that would offer job security and have many options once I finished my schooling. As do many others who have served in the military look for after they are out of the branches they served in. Limiting the use of the GI Bill® to schools is a literal slap in the face to all veterans who don’t feel they need college as much as they need a trade school.

I’ve learned a lot already in my school and with taking away the GI Bill® from trade schools many others will miss out on what could change their lives for the better. I chose to do welding at Triangle Tech and it was a great decision for me to make, which is a trade school. So do not take away the ability to use the GI Bill® for trade schools give us veterans a choice in what type of school we choose to attend.
I am an eight-year Marine Corps veteran and a five-year Army Reserve veteran. I decided to serve my country because I needed to get out into the world and see what it was like. I did a tour in Afghanistan in 2010-2011 and was afforded opportunities to travel and increase my understanding of other cultures. Upon my exit from active duty in the Marine Corps, I decided to use my GI Bill® to further my education. I enrolled in New Castle School of Trades.

This is my third time at NCST. I first took advantage of my GI Bill® at NCST in 2015 when I participated in the Commercial Driver’s License program. Two years later I enrolled in their Electrical Technology program, graduating with my specialized Associates Degree. Then in the summer of 2018 I enrolled a third time in the Industrial Maintenance with Wind and Solar program. I have nothing but good things to say about the instructors, but without my GI Bill®, I’d likely have never seen the inside of a school as a student again.

With the GI Bill®, I’ve been given an opportunity to learn trades and skills of which I had no previous knowledge. I now have the opportunity to acquire good-paying jobs in competitive fields. I’m not only fortunate to have had great teachers, but also to have the GI Bill® to encourage me to further my learning without worrying about debt and student loans that I’d be paying on years after graduation. I’ve been able to hone skills in fields which I didn’t think I even had an interest.

Without the GI Bill®, I wouldn’t have given school another try. I’ve been to NCST three times and am working on my second degree, something I would never have imagined a decade ago.
Wade Hood
Triangle Tech
Sunbury, Pennsylvania

Around January 2015 I lost my third factory job since retiring from the Air Force in 2009. I started researching different careers and found the trades had a shortage of people. I researched schools and found Triangle Tech. Triangle Tech was close and offered the courses I wanted. After visiting the school and speaking to them I took the plunge and started school for the Maintenance Electrical Technician program in June 2016. The course was challenging and very informative. Lots of information was delivered by skilled instructors in a short 16 months. The instructors were more than willing to work with you one on one if needed to ensure you understood the information. The information and hands on training were instrumental in me receiving multiple job offers before I graduated.

Upon graduation I accepted a position in a small electric company where I have been getting more practical experience in residential, commercial, and industrial electrical services to prepare me to someday run my own business. The education I received at Triangle Tech gave me a strong foundation in the ever changing and challenging electrical field.
Daniel Cripps
Triangle Tech
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Daniel knew at a young age that he wanted to work with his hands and follow in his uncle’s footsteps to become an electrician. His first job as a teenager was with a local contractor and from there he always had it in the back of his mind that he would return to the trades at some point. Daniel was with the Navy from August of 1991-August of 1994. He did have some odd jobs after he left the Navy but knew something was missing. Soon after 9/11 he joined the Coast Guard where he served 16 years before his retirement. He immediately enrolled at Triangle Tech after seeing commercials for the school on TV.

During his time in the Coast Guard he served as a cook. He would always see people coming in and out and fixing things around him. He wanted to be that guy. He decided to study Maintenance Electricity and Construction Technology at Triangle Tech. He will be completing his degree this May of 2019. He plans on returning to Triangle Tech to study the Carpentry program. Daniel’s ultimate goal is to find a job in the Building Maintenance field when he completes his studies.
Ernie Johnson

New Castle School of Trades
New Castle, Pennsylvania

I am a retired United States Air Force Veteran. In my time/career with the military I was in Vietnam, Desert Storm, OIF and OEF. I am now retired after 30 years of service and am currently enrolled at New Castle School of Trades, New Castle, PA to obtain my 2 year Specialized Associate Degree in Automotive Technology. I chose the auto field to expand my already vast mechanical knowledge, having been an aircraft mechanic in the military. The reason for my choice is because the auto industry is ever-changing and NCST has cutting edge equipment to learn with such as Hybrid’s, electric cars, service writing courses and the newest computer software. I am very fortunate to have been able to make my own choice as to where I wanted to obtain an education. My belief is that our GI Bill® funding should be our own choice as we have earned this distinct privilege. Thank you for hearing me out.
Samuel Stefanik
Triangle Tech
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

My name is Sam and I am a Triangle Tech CADD with Additive Manufacturing & 3D Printing Technology 3rd term student and a veteran. I retired honorably with 21 years of service in the U.S. Air Force, and another 3 years as a civil service employee. After moving on from my Air Force career, I became an auto parts delivery driver. During my deliveries, I passed the Triangle Tech school in Greensburg several times a day. Their bold school name and award signage always caught my attention. In the spring of 2018, I decided a trade school would be the most effective way for me to continue my education and search out a new career path. I spent months researching and comparing schools and degree programs, and Triangle Tech always stood out in my mind. I scheduled a meeting with the admissions department to thoroughly research their programs. Upon entering the building, I noticed a note on the building directory board: “Welcome to Triangle Tech Samuel Stefanik”. That was a huge testament to how I would be viewed here, as a person, not just another face or number in the class. The management staff is fantastic, the instructors are firm but fair; they encourage me to apply myself and keep me interested (which was something I lacked in my high school career years ago). The curriculum is fast paced, however, it is communicated in a way that keeps me interested and focused on the task at hand. Finally, the Career Counseling Department and multitude of opportunities available to me after graduation, encourage me to stay on track to graduate with honors. I am very happy with my decision to attend Triangle Tech, and I am please with the quality of education I receive. I will recommend Triangle Tech to anyone interested in becoming a skilled tradesman.
Kevin Livingston

Triangle Tech
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

I chose HVAC because I was a carpenter and I wanted to expand my knowledge base to help my customers with more services. I picked Triangle Tech due to its proximity to my house and I wanted the degree not just a certificate like the places around me. My biggest challenge was everything was new. Almost every class I had at school was learning a new skill. After a few months at school I realized this was going to be my new career not just an add on to my old one. This kept me motivated to continue learning every part of the field I could. My goals after graduation were to move south and keep my pay about the same as I was already making. I spoke to a few companies from Virginia to South Carolina and since I wasn’t a resident they wouldn’t give me a chance. That led me to look in Pennsylvania and I found a job with same pay and more benefits. In school we started with basics working with pipe and learning the refrigeration cycle. That led to getting a taste of working in commercial refrigeration. The next semester we went through all residential jobs and how to size units. The last semester we did controls which I enjoyed the most. After graduation I got hired at Johnson Controls where I am well taken care of and continue to build on my knowledge in the industry. We do installation and refit on air handling units. This job has us traveling all across the country and we have to test and ensure the units are functioning properly. This enables me to use skills learned at school to identify what’s causing the problems and how to fix them. Future students should learn all they can. I am confident my training at Triangle Tech got me where I am today. Without the instructors at school pushing me I would still be swinging a hammer. I plan to move up within JCI to get me where I want to go, hopefully and can transfer down south in a few years then I will be completely happy.
Oussama Hanine

All State Career School
Essington, Pennsylvania

Oussama was born in Morocco in 1975 and lives there until 2006. At this time, he moved to the United States and shortly thereafter he joined the United States Army. Because of his technical ability & knowledge of three languages, Oussama became a chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological operations specialist. He served in the military for 4 years and secured his honorable discharge in 2011. Oussama worked as a CDL and cab driver from 2011 to 2015. In 2018, he decided to go back to school to be an HVAC technician. He enrolled in the One Year- 960 hour HVAC program at All State Career School. While in school, he gained experience as an installer for Quick Response, LLC, in Philadelphia, PA.

On February 19, 2019 Oussama completed his HVAC training at All State Career School. He started work as an HVAC technician at Bob Cermighano Heating & Air Conditioning on April 15, 2019.

We congratulate Oussama for his commitment to the military and starting his career as an HVAC technician.
Adam Barnett
Triangle Tech
DuBois, Pennsylvania

My name is Adam and I served with the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. I was an infantryman assigned to alpha company 1/75. I served four years with the 101st. I greatly enjoyed my time in service and met some of the best friends I’ve ever had still to this day. I selected Triangle Tech as my school of choice because of the hands on approach and the amount of one-on-one training you receive from the instructors. I enrolled in Welding and Fabrication Technology. Each one of my instructors is extremely knowledgeable about all topics in the welding industry and show great pride to teach the trade to newer generations. I believe Triangle Tech will greatly help me accomplish my career goals by the amount the staff sets you up with success, from the technical training, to the career services they offer you during and even after graduation.
My name is Steve Guntrum and I am a Triangle Tech graduate and current student at Triangle Tech for my second program. I was in the United States Navy for 5 years where I received an honorable discharge. What made me decide to attend Triangle Tech over other traditional universities or even other trade schools, was that I knew in order to be successful in life you have to obtain proper training and a degree to show that you are certified in your field.

I always believed that knowledge is the strongest asset you can have in life so that is what made me come back for the second program, my first program was the Refrigeration, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning program where I graduated at the top of my class with a 3.9 GPA. The program I am currently attending the Maintenance Electricity and Building Construction program, what made decide to do this program is that both programs tie into each other in a lot of ways. The reason I wanted to focus on both paths is because my plan is to get into Direct Digital Controls and Building Automation control systems. I feel Building Automation is one the fastest growing specialties in both degree programs because companies are always trying to find ways to make their building more energy efficient. None of this would be possible for me to obtain my dreams and aspirations of becoming a Building Automation technician if it wasn’t for Triangle Tech and the funding available for the students to obtain. Technical Colleges are very important to society since most of the trades are dying out, and are in dying need of people to fill positions. I would most definitely recommend anyone to attend a Technical College for the main reason is you will never go without a job. You will have a career that you can take with you to any state and mostly of any country.

In conclusion if funding is ever capped for Technical Colleges for students, it won’t just hurt the students trying to learn the trade but you will affect the fields they are trying to get into because the trades won’t be able to fill the open positions and future opening positions.
Adam Smith

Triangle Tech
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

I chose Triangle Tech because when I visited the school I really liked how they prepared their students and the staff was very friendly and seemed to care a lot about me and my interest for RHVAC. But before I went visit Triangle Tech I did some research online about the school and found out they were on the Forbes list for top technical schools, which really impressed me and that’s another reason why I wanted to go because if they made it on to the Forbes list, I knew they were producing good students and I wanted to be part of that success. I have learned a lot about the RHVAC field because the teachers are very knowledgeable and they also have many years of RHVAC experience. The teachers have set up labs for my class and I to do and they relate it real world problems that you will face out in the field. I find that very useful because it will make us more marketable to employers because they won’t have to send out help to us when we face a problem out in the field. Also we will be more self sufficient than other graduates and most employers like that idea. I have been maintaining A’s in my class because of the amount of knowledge my instructors have been providing me and in return that will help elevate my skills in the field. My plans for after I graduate is to get a job on the commercial or industrial side of the field or even a government RHVAC job. We had a job fair and I got to meet some of the employers that I will be dealing with when I graduate. That being said, with that experience with them before I graduate will help me build a relationship with the employer and help me get a head start in the hiring process. My time at Triangle Tech and I have a lot more to learn in the upcoming semesters and I look forward to continuing my education at Triangle Tech.
My name is Osvaldo Figueroa Martinez and I’m a United States Marine Corps Veteran. I am currently studying carpentry at Triangle Tech to attain an Associates Degree while having experience in the field.

I chose this program because there is a shortage of carpenters and I will always be guaranteed work. This will ensure that I am always able to provide for my son, who is 6 yrs old and my daughter who is 3 years old. It is my belief that if veterans have the opportunity to go to a technical school, not only would we be able to use our skills we learned in the service, but also use them is a way that will help to take our minds off of our experiences in combat in a positive way. Unfortunately, not every veteran is in a financial situation to fund their own tuition at a technical school. My fellow service members and I would appreciate it if we were allowed to continue our education at a technical school with the GI Bill® as it would help in more ways that you may realize.
Wayne Baranski
Triangle Tech
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

My name is Wayne Baranski and I am currently enrolled at Triangle Tech in the Maintenance Electricity and Construction Technology program. I began school February 18th of 2019 and I am set to wrap things up and graduate in May of 2020. The reason I point this out is, if you had your way, I would be going to school for much longer and that is something that I cannot do. After serving 13 years in the Army, I struggled with meaningless job after job, trying to find a place in the civilian world. I found Triangle Tech and discovered that they offer training in a field of work that interests me very much. Their school and course offer me the opportunity to get a 2 year associates degree in 16 months time. At my age, I really wouldn’t have any interest in a 4 year school. Triangle Tech has offered curriculum that is geared more towards my learning needs, which is hands on and without the added curriculum of a traditional 4 year schools.

In a short amount of time I have learned many things and I am confident that I will be able to perform to a high standard in the civilian work place when I have completed this course. Already I am doing electrical work around my own home and I am helping out many of my own friends and family. If people like me were required to attend 4 year schools and not trade schools, you would have less veterans using their entitlements and probably never attending schools like these, thus never bettering their lives. That is something that we were promised!
Marc Carroll

Fortis College
Columbia, South Carolina

I was a lost veteran, had no guidance of where to go or what to do next. I was stuck behind a dead end desk job managing a job that was managing me. I wanted to be back working with my hands—like I had when I was in the Military. My goal was to be working, turning wrenches, at the VA. I didn’t care where or what department at the VA, but I wanted to be around my brothers and sisters.

Fortis provided me an education and the ability to learn with hands-on training and gain invaluable knowledge. This training has brought me through some rough times and keeps me going today. My first HVAC/R job occurred while I was still attending Fortis College. Due to my Military training and continuing education, I was able to start in the industry. My education and experience afforded me the opportunity to get my dream job with the VA. Six months ago, I interviewed for and was given a WG11 position as an HVAC Operator in the Columbia Veteran’s Administration Healthcare System. In addition to working at the VA, I also work part-time as an instructor at Fortis College. I instruct all facets of refrigerants at Fortis, and am able to give others knowledge and help them find a way to get ahead. I believe it’s my calling to pass along what I know and be among those who I fought with. Teaching, working and managing my own business and doing what I truly love is what I am doing now. Fortis College instructors, the knowledge they gave me which I give to those I work with and those I teach has brought meaning back to me. I owe my life to Fortis College Columbia and my passion to HVAC.
Amber Ward

Fortis College
Columbia, South Carolina

My name is Amber Ward. I am a US Army Veteran, mother, and wife. When I was discharged from the military, I knew I needed to do something else with my life. That’s when I decided to attend Fortis College in Columbia, SC for Dental Assisting. My experience there was amazing. I always had help when I needed it. I was the Valedictorian for the 2018 graduation class. I received a job offer during my last externship and I accepted it. I now work for Carolina Children’s Dentistry as a Dental Assistant. It’s definitely the best experience and most memorable thing I have done thus far. My life has come far since the Military and I know it’s only going to get better from here.

LaToya Mitchell

Fortis College
Columbia, South Carolina

My name is LaToya Mitchell. I served 8 years in the U.S. Army and did one tour in Iraq. I went to basic training at Fort Jackson, SC in 2004. After my time in the service I decided to come back to South Carolina for a change of pace. I got a pretty good job when I first got here but I wasn’t satisfied with what I was doing and wanted to be a better provider for my family so I decided to go back to school. I chose Fortis because of the commercials I heard and it also offered the program I was most interested in, Dental Assisting. Once I took the tour of the school, I was excited to start my new career. My overall experience with Fortis was great and I learned so much. Since graduating I have a fantastic job that works great with my schedule that allows me to spend time with my family.
Alcide Morrissette

Fortis College
Nashville, Tennessee

My journey began when I was injured in combat during Activity Duty for the United States Army. I felt that the Army had used me and spit me out into a place where I did not know how to negotiate my way through. I had no skills to be in a social setting nor had the thought of going back to school crossed my mind!

Years passed it seemed and finally I thought I was ready to try life one last time. I contacted Fortis Institute and set up an appointment to look at going back to school. Fortis did not stop in making contact with me and helping step by step in making a choice of what to do. I found that they understood that I was a veteran and molded a plan for me. From the person at the front desk to the dean himself everyone welcomed me and treated me with such a genuine love and respect that it sparked something in me that I recognized from a long time ago. I was a part of a team.

Again I found myself feeling life being pumped back into my spirit.

I have been here at Fortis since October 2018 and am still very excited to graduate next year. The classrooms are small and the faculty members take the time to ensure that people’s needs are met. I really feel that they know veterans and what we go through every day. They took the time to sit with me and make sure that all my needs were met. They have stood with me after classes to ensure I am successful at my new area of specialty, Cardio Vascular Technology. If they do not know an answer, I have witnessed several of the instructors/professors find the answer that same day. Everyone knows my issues and they take the time to help me walk my path. They will not do the work for me and they hold me accountable all the time. I know in my heart that they love veterans and will help all who come into the Fortis doors behind me.

As a veteran I would suggest going to talk with Fortis Institute for an awesome career change and a new path in life. There is no doubt in my mind that I will graduate from the program and that I will find a job in afterwards. I am proud to be part of the Armed Services and now being part of an awesome team/family at Fortis Institute. With Fortis behind me, I know my voice is being heard.
After twenty-one years of military service in the Army, my career brought me to what would be my last duty station at the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky. It was an honor to have the opportunity to serve and deploy with the 101st and to have this unit be the conclusion of what I look back on as a fulfilling career as well as the best two decades of my life.

Upon retiring, I took six months of staying at home and doing nothing to contemplate my next move and career. A friend suggested radiography. This appealed to me because it has a great deal to do with the anatomy and physiology of the human body and I have always been very active with exercise and the function of the body. It is also a field that there is a great demand for, and it is not very physically demanding; at least not compared to Army life. So, I found myself looking into the field of radiology. The schools I was looking at were attractive due to their condensed schedules and the shortened duration of time needed to complete the program. After talking to the admissions representatives from my prospective schools, I kept coming back to Fortis.

As I began my academic journey at Fortis, I was not disappointed. The curriculum and the speed at which it is attacked proved to be quite challenging, but totally manageable to anyone that is serious about investing in their education. In addition, the Radiologic Technologist (RT) teaching staff is truly dedicated to the success of every student. They make the course challenging but ensure that it is tailored towards preparing the students for success at passing the National Registry as well as fully understanding the real-world experiences that we will all eventually encounter. I am now entering my sixth overall term, and currently beginning my fourth clinical site rotation.

Overall, my experience at Fortis has been a rewarding one thus far. I would highly recommend Fortis to anyone pursuing a career in the field of radiology. Between the top-notch admissions staff, the excellent real-world experience you will receive at the multiple clinic sites, and the unmatched experience, knowledge, and compassion that is always on display by the instructors, one cannot go wrong in selecting this program of study at this school. When my class began, I was hopeful that I had made a good choice. I know now that I have.
James Lillback

Fortis College
Cookeville, Tennessee

I saw advertisements for a truck-driving program in my area that started every 2 weeks. I found out that my GI Bill® would pay for my tuition as well as housing allowances.

I enjoyed going to school everyday. The training was thorough and the instructors were patient and very helpful. They are full of useful experiences and knowledge or the trucking industry. Looking back, the time spent learning and practicing all the parking skills was very valuable towards my job at May Trucking Company.

I am a Navy veteran who once doubted my life choices to leave the service. This was until I found my career in the trucking industry. I feel financially secure and happy with my life choices thanks to Fortis and May Trucking Company.

Now I work for May Trucking Company as the local Hostler. I move freight as needed from their Nashville yard to a customers. The skills I leaned from Fortis are exactly what I do now.
Erica Mitchell
Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Houston, Texas

Erica served in the US Army for 8 years as an automated logistical specialist. It was during her time in the US Army that she experienced two deployments to Kuwait and Iraq and developed a love for aviation. Erica became a student at Aviation Institute of Maintenance – Houston (AIM) in April 2017 and has managed to become an AIM success story by simply having the drive to be a better person while doing what she loves. She has achieved a great deal as a student at AIM including being an active member of the NTHS.

Erica recently received the Pratt and Whitney Engine Training Scholarship, as well as the Southwest Airlines Maintenance Training Scholarship. Erica was honored at the Thirtieth International Women in Aviation Conference by Pratt and Whitney for becoming the recipient of their Engine Training Scholarship award on March 14, 2019 in Long Beach, California.

In addition to her academic endeavors, Erica worked as a production specialist at InTech Aerospace. She has earned her FAA Airframe & Powerplant Mechanic license and her goal is to become a full time employee with a major airline. Erica has an amazing attitude and way with others that will serve her well in the future.
Jose Mendoza

Escoffier, School of Culinary Arts
Austin, Texas

Jose Mendoza was born on 20 May 1967 in Brooklyn New York. At the age of 10 he was taken to Puerto Rico where he graduated from High School and attended a Technical College for Computer Electronics Technician which he graduated from in conjunction with High School. Jose went on to move back to New York at the age of 18 but after 2 years of that life decided to make a change for his future and enlisted in the US Army as a Paratrooper Combat Medic.

During his 22 years of active service, Jose deployed numerous times and is a 2 time Bronze Star recipient for his actions in combat. Although Jose continued to work with the military training Soldiers after he retired from service, he felt there was something else he needed to do. In 2016 he enrolled in to the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts where he earned his Associates Degree.

Although it was not his intentions, Jose decided to open his own Puerto Rican Cuisine restaurant in Harker Heights Texas Called MJ Kitchen. In 2018 he again decided to go back to Auguste for his Pastry Degree. In his restaurant, which he calls a Kitchen, the concept is a Mom and Pop in where a different meal from Puerto Rico is prepared. Just like when you go to anyone’s house, you do not get to place an order for what you would like to eat, rather you are offered what has been prepared and you enjoy it.

The Kitchen is run by his wife Gladys who also graduated from the Pastry program and his son Joevany.
Shateeka Douglas

Fortis College
Houston, Texas

Being able to choose the school that is right for me to continue my education is important as an individual but more importantly as a veteran. After serving 10+ years in the Army as a healthcare specialist, I chose to further my education at Fortis Institute by selecting a career path in Medical Billing and Coding (MBC). I chose this school and career field in that it was the first opportunity presented to me to further my education by offering low cost, a short program curriculum, and also a school closely located to home and one covered by the post 911 GI Bill®.

As a veteran, being given the right to choose the school best for me and my education is imperative and an entitlement that every veteran should have. I feel that it is only right that veterans have the freedom to use their voice and make the choice in selecting what he or she would feel is best for them, especially after devoting their blood, sweat, and tears to the military for a number of years. These freedoms fall in line with the goals and objectives that I had for myself, which include receiving a productive education within a timely manner and to secure a position that will allow me an endless opportunity in a versatile industry of healthcare as a professional.
Jillian Morales

The College of Health Care Professions
Austin, Texas

The College of Healthcare Professionals has been an excellent institution for higher learning, and I am thankful that I am able to utilize my VA benefits. After graduating from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2007, I commissioned into the US Army and served eight and half years as a Medical Service Corps Officer on active duty. I decided to depart the military for many reasons, however my plan was to return to school. I have a bachelor’s degree but required a few additional courses in order to apply to PA school. In the process of applying, I realized the competitive nature of the PA program and that organizations were looking for candidates with experience. In the medical field, I have administrative experience but not clinical. Simultaneously, my spouse, who is still serving in the military, relocated our family to Austin, TX. After researching options to obtain clinical experience, I decided to seek out the best medical assisting school. Every search I conducted, be it accreditation or veteran friendly schools, led me back to CHCP. I have been here now for almost 7 months and can genuinely say it has been one of the best decisions I’ve made in continuing my education. Not only is the staff reasonable and accommodating to veterans, they ensure all students have a fair opportunity to receive a superior education. I have maintained a 4.0 GPA, and I give back to the community through CHCP volunteer programs; none of which would have been possible without my VA benefits.
Jacob “Jake” Kelley

The Ocean Corporation
Houston, Texas

Twenty years ago, the GI Bill® charted a new course for my life by allowing me to go to commercial diving school at The Ocean Corporation. The school helped start a career that has been challenging, difficult and rewarding, sometimes all at the same time. A career choice that has allowed me to be a success as a diver, husband and father.

There was little doubt that I would serve our country by joining the Marines. A family member has been in one branch or another of the US military since at least 1864, with most choosing to serve in the Marines. The amount of financial support provided by the VA when I attended school pales in comparison to current funding levels and that is a good thing. Even with my GI Bill®, I still struggled and had to work while I was going to Ocean Corp. The important thing was that I not only had the ability to choose what type of school (trade, community college, four year) I wanted to go to, but also specifically which school. One of the best things about this country is the freedom to choose. It is your choice to serve your country, to vote and yes to go to the post-secondary school that YOU want. Should you research and compare the colleges and careers that you are considering? Absolutely, but you should be able to use your VA funding however you want.

With the education I earned at a career school, I currently work as a manager at an energy company. Instead of working for commercial diving companies, I now hire them. Companies that prefer to hire veterans, veterans who graduate from the school they choose to attend.
D’Andra J. Scott, a 33-year-old veteran of the United States Army, was born and raised in Dallas, TX. He graduated from South Oak Cliff High School. Being the oldest of three siblings, I had always wanted to do something different in a career and to explore the world. I knew that joining the military would be difficult and challenging, but I was up for the journey. I enlisted in the military on June 17, 2004. I went to Basic Training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina, AIT in Aberdeen, Maryland and then on to Fort Hood in Kileen, Texas. I experienced three deployments in both the Middle East and Kosovo. Unfortunately, during my last deployment, I was severely injured when my tactical vehicle was hit by an IED.

After serving 10 years in the military, I decided to enroll in school. Since being in the civilian world, I have gained an acting degree, and a Barber’s License, but for me that wasn’t enough. I always wanted to get into the medical field. My mom always said that’s where I would fit in. I visited CHCP and from the time I walked in the door I was welcomed with open arms. I decided to join the LMRT Program because I think x-rays are fascinating. My instructor, Mrs. Meyers, is amazing and she always shows her passion for the program. I would definitely recommend The College of Healthcare Professionals to anyone that has a passion for helping others and wants great training.
My name is Doug Ellisor and I am presently attending Fortis Institute in Houston, Texas. As a veteran, I've earned the right to choose any VA approved educational institution to meet my educational goals. I chose the Fortis HVAC-R Program because it was the best fit for the education and training that I was seeking. After doing my research and comparison of different colleges I discovered that Fortis Institute had the most detailed and to the point program available for me.

As soldiers transitioning back to the private sector we face unique challenges reintegrating into society, and should not have their options limited due to the proprietary nature of the educational institution that they choose to attend. Veterans serve primarily to earn the educational benefits to avoid the student loans needed to attend school, and a significant percentage of veterans are more interested in obtaining a marketable skill as opposed to traditional education.

Fortis fills a void in society by providing a highly skilled, certified and/or licensed workforce in a timely manner. VA approved schools have to meet several requirements determined by the VA. The curriculum, program cost, and even the length of the program must be approved by the VA. This alone should be the determining factor of whether or not a school is VA approved, not whether it is proprietary or not. The choice should be given to the Veteran that has served our country.
On February 26, 2018 I started my Automotive Technology Program at Lincoln Tech in Grand Prairie, TX. I have been working on cars since I was 6 years old with my father, but technology has changed so much since then. I learned a lot from the instructors at this school as well as all the hands on and from other students. There were also many other Veterans at the school and several were in the same class as I was in the beginning. I was brought up to date on all the current technology and tools of the trade. I was able to get my wife’s vehicle working again as well from attending the classes and learning. I graduated on March 26, 2019. I enjoyed the training so much as well I am now currently enrolled in the Collision Program that starts on April 15th 2019. I was also involved in the Lincoln Tech Race Team at this campus as well. We were currently working on building a new race car for drag racing. I plan to pick it back up when I start my new program. I am very grateful for all the training and education I received from Lincoln Tech. I served 22 years in the Army and I am a Disabled Veteran and I graduated with a 3.95 GPA.
Edward Smith

Asher College
Dallas, Texas

I started my 2nd journey in May 2014 when I decided to move to Dallas, Texas. I had just wrapped up my 1st journey with the U.S. Army just shy of serving 23 years. I found myself like most veterans entering the civilian world not quite sure where or what to do after being a soldier for more than half my life. It was at that moment I realized I had experience and skills from 3 specific skill identifiers in the Army and not sure how any of them would benefit me in the civilian sector. I then ran my skills and experience through a simulator translating my Army skills to civilian. It did an excellent job translating my skills, but I still felt incomplete because I had the experience covered by far, but lacking on the education department. I was faced with a decision about going back to school in my late 40’s to fill the education gap or putting myself out there with just my experience alone.

I began my search for an institution that best fit me. I wanted to be physically in school and have some flexibility with my schedule. After doing some comparisons I decided upon Asher College and it ended up being one of the best decisions I made in my lifetime. My experience with them has been and continues to be exceptional. I can truly say without any doubt they help me understand my true potential. Asher College helped me enhance my technical skills, but more importantly my communication skills with others. Asher’s unique style of blended learning along with professional development classes are what I believe helped me unleash my potential. Thank you Asher College, for all that you have done for me and my family.
Anthony Davis

Arlington Career Institute
Grand Prairie, Texas

Anthony is a 44-year-old Military Veteran who was one of the first students to enroll in Arlington Career Institute’s new Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration program. He attended school Monday through Saturday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., for seven, tough weeks, and he graduated at the top of his class on December 14, 2018. The day after Christmas, he started his new Job with Houk Air Conditioning and Heating in Arlington, Texas. His employer stated, “Please send us some more graduates like Anthony. He is an excellent tech and employee.”
Claudia M. Browning

The College of Health Care Professions
Houston, Texas

I am an honorably discharged disable veteran. I currently attend The College of Health Care Professions as a full time student in Houston, Texas. I am also a single mother with a full time job. Collectively, I dedicate close to eighty hours a week to school and work. This has been challenging for many reasons but well worth it. I only have five weeks of school left and I started in August of last year. This type of program has been extremely beneficial to me. Concluding this program I will have successfully completed a program necessary to acquire a full time position as a Medical Assistant within the medical field. It will also allow me to take the necessary tests to become a certified as a Medical Assistant. I am 34 years old and have been out of school for almost twenty years. Going to traditional four year college after my discharge from the military simply was not an option for me. I did not have the time to spend four years away from my son, or four years working a job that I am unhappy at while I earned my degree just to make ends meet. I used my GI Bill® at CHCP and completed my program in less than a year. Shortly, I will have the job I have always wanted and be back at home with my son. I am very grateful to have the option of utilizing my GI Bill® for programs like the ones CHCP offer.
I am a former Navy Air Traffic Controller who started a t-shirt business using aeronautical charts from my days in the military. In 2009, I was experimenting with different types of aeronautical charts and came up with an idea to screen print approach plates on t-shirts and sell to aviation professionals. It was a hit! Word of mouth soon spread and friends and strangers started to notice my designs and asked me to make t-shirts with their cities flight maps. The approach plates had captured the attention of not only pilots but even people with no affiliation with aviation. This continued until I took a leap of faith and created a clothing line from the maps that I had used in the past. My ambitions pushed me further when I decided to enroll in fashion college and grow from t-shirt designer to an actual cut & sew fashion designer. Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story.
I experienced many difficulties throughout my life and somehow these events only shaped me to be the person I am today. I often thought about becoming a nurse or traveling the world, so I joined the US Army and studied to be a paramedic.

Eventually I went to school to become an LVN. I felt a great calling to help others. After 20 years of working as a nurse, I knew I needed to go back to school to continue my journey. My dream was to one day perform OB ultrasounds. By this time, my children were all grown, so we decided we were all going to go to school together.

My son is also a US Army Veteran and he often dreamed of being a doctor when he was younger. My son other son began at St. Mary’s University for Computer Science but later felt drawn to the medical field. And my daughter-in-law started out at STC studying psychology. But after we all found out about CHCP, we all enrolled.

My sons recently graduated from the LMRT program and successfully obtained jobs. I am about to complete the DMS program, and my daughter-in-law is in her 2nd semester of the program.

We continue to remain positive and love the fact that as soon as we walk in the door people know we are a family and we are doing this together. We feel we have made a positive impact at CHCP by how we treat one another, and our respect for our teachers, and peers. We all love the fact that the staff know everyone who walks through the door, it is that personal touch that you really learn to appreciate.

The most important thing I’ve learned from my experience being back in school, is that it is never too late to go back no matter where you are in your life. If you have the desire to do something and you have a passion to help others, you will be successful. The only person that stands in your way is you. I’ve met amazing people along the way and we’ve shared similar difficulties and life experiences.

I am grateful for the experience at CHCP, and the amazing opportunity I have experienced with my family here.
After 22 years in Army, retiring as a Field Artillery NCO, I was looking for the next chapter in my life. On July 4th, 2016 the air conditioning went out in my house. The repairs ended up costing me $3400. At that time I decided that working within A/C repair would be a good career, considering the area and the weather. I looked into schools and had many choices. I started school 6 months later, and as I was out-processing from the Army, I started in the HVAC program at Fortis College. Upon graduation I was hired by John Moore and then worked for Beacon Equipment. While I was a student, because of my military background, students gravitated toward me and I was always happy to assist them. I've also always been enthusiastic about helping people, and I took a call from Fortis's former program director in HVAC, who offered me a job. I have been working in the field and as an instructor ever since.

I could have used my G.I. Bill anywhere but I ended up choosing Fortis because it was the best fit for me.
Ashley Shoemaker

The College of Health Care Professions
Fort Worth, Texas

I am currently a College of Health Care Professions (CHCP) student on externship as a Licensed Medical Radiology Technician (LMRT). I enrolled in CHCP with the dream of becoming an X-ray technician with the literal definition of hope: to cherish a desire with anticipation; to want something to happen or be true.

I was told thirteen years ago that I “would never have what it takes to amount to being an X-ray Tech”. Being and X-ray Tech was my dream and I was not going to let it be crushed. I knew it would not happen overnight and that it would take a lot of falling down and getting back up to achieve this. I first enrolled at another college, to start their Radiology program. I knew the classes within the program would be hard, but I knew I would push myself to be my best. The Anatomy and Physiology classes were where I became disheartened. Very little time was spent on bones (osteology). Not much else pertained to what would be essential for me to learn the career I wanted for the remainder of my life. On the verge of giving up, I took a side road and got a degree in a different area and settled. Two years later I saw an ad for CHCP on social media. Suddenly, I had a gut feeling I needed to look at this school. To anyone that wants to come to the school, my words to you are, “What are you waiting for?” The only wish I have had pertaining to the school is that I wish I had known about CHCP sooner.

Being at CHCP has made me feel that a dream is never too far out of reach. I was treated not only as a person but as family. Coming from a past where I was treated as a number, this school was very different and welcoming. The staff and instructors don’t give up on their students and don’t let their students give up on themselves. I have had moments where my life situations have caused great stress and weight on me, and my instructors listened, understood, and encouraged me.

There is not a person to whom I wouldn’t recommend CHCP. Every class, every lesson pertained to exactly what I would need for my career. It seemed like it was catered specifically for me. CHCP is literally a family who is caring and compassionate for their students and their education. I honestly do not know where I would be if I had not come across this school. I would not be performing hands on learning of the job that I have yearned for over the past decade. CHCP gave me the best gift I could ever ask for: Hope.
Terence Hamilton

The College of Health Care Professions
San Antonio, Texas

The medical field is my home and helping people is what I do. It’s what I have always done. For twenty years I was a hospital corpsman in the United States Navy. I lived in numerous places, traveled the world, and as per Navy standards, had the ability to pack up my life at any moment’s notice. However, there was one aspect that remained my constant; patching people up and helping them get well.

Once I retired from the military, I thought it would be a good time to learn new skills, and step away from the medical field. I gained new skills in a different field, but something was missing. They say when you love what you do, it is a career not a job. I realized being in the medical field was not just my job, it was and still is who I am. So, I embraced an abrupt change, but this time I headed back to my roots. I enrolled at the College of Health Care Professions (CHEP) in the medical assistant program without a second thought.

CHEP is great college, where I can attend classes both online as well as in the classroom. This is very convenient for me especially having two small children. The staff are incredibly helpful and insightful. CHCP has added additional skills and training needed to be the best version of myself. I look forward to using the knowledge gained here along with my Naval experience to obtain my medical assistant certification.
J.D. Buchert

West Coast University
Dallas, Texas

West Coast University-Dallas alum JD Buchert graduated in November 2015 with a bachelor’s of science in nursing after a long gap in his academic history.

“When I was younger, I was in medical school and my wife passed away so I had to drop out to raise my son, who was 9 months old,” he said. “When my son graduated with his master’s degree, he convinced me to go back to school and nursing was the route I took.”

Buchert said he chose WCU due to its accelerated BSN program. Returning to school 25 years later, the last thing the grandfather of four wanted was to have long breaks between semesters.

“I wanted to go all the way through without interruption. Also, being a little bit older or even twice the age of the other students, I didn’t want to spend 12 years in school getting my medical degree,” he said. “At first, I can tell you, it was a little difficult to retrain my brain to learn, but it’s probably one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.”

Buchert more than made up for lost time during his 26 months at WCU-Dallas. Besides being on the honor roll and a program ambassador, Buchert was elected president of the National Student Nursing Association, selected for the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau and traveled to Panama with the Global Public Health program.

“I think as I got older I appreciated the educational system more than when I was younger. When I was younger, I just wanted to finish and get it over with. As an older student I wanted more to absorb and take the knowledge to heart,” he said.
My story starts back in June 2013. This was the first time I had used my GI Bill® for education benefits. I got into the LMRT program. The first impression I got from The College of Healthcare Professionals was the professionalism from the staff. The career services team is on top of their game getting resources out to students that need them. Fast forward 2018 I wanted to get more rounded in the medical field so I reached out to CHCP and once again and like a well-oiled machine they walked me through the process of what is needed from me to enroll and within a month I enrolled in the Medical Assistant program and ready for classes two weeks later.

I will most definitely recommend CHCP to anyone who is looking at returning to school either first time or gain hands on skills as a Physical Therapy Tech, Coding and Billing, Medical Assistant, or LMRT. They are supplying quality medical field employees to our community. I have seen first-hand some students that are now out in the medical field during internship and they had the skills already as if they have been there for five years. CHCP will give you the knowledge needed and skills necessary to be ready for hire.
Ricardo Tuda

Western Technical College
El Paso, Texas

I served in the United States Navy for 8 years as a Navy Corpsman (FMF) from 2003 to 2011. Served in 2 deployments, my first was in the USS Enterprise (CVN 65) to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and my second to Sangin, Afghanistan with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. During my 8 years of service I didn’t take advantage of the school opportunities I had. When I was discharged from the military, I didn’t know what to do. It took me 5 years to decide to go back to school and use my G.I Bill benefits to earn a higher education. I enrolled in Western Tech’s Automotive program because the schedule was right for me and I got a tool box something other schools didn’t provide. I completed the program and received my Associate Degree. After internship, I was hired in my field of study at Need 4 Speed Automotive. I wanted to learn other skills and decided to enroll in the Advanced Welding Program. I want to be able to provide for my family by having the necessary skills to do so. I would like to thank my wife, kids, family, for their support and understanding. Also, thank you to my instructors and staff whom played an important part in my education.
Joseph Rodriquez
MyComputerCareer
Dallas, Texas

Before attending classes at MyComputerCareer I was searching for employment in the construction industry. I was unemployed for 9 months and this was hard for my family. I did not like the construction industry because of the manual labor, weather and long hours. Before attending MyComputerCareer I attended another IT school but I did not like the curricula and the set up. I only met with my instructor once a month and there was no formal guidance or technical training.

I heard about MyComputerCareer at a career fair. I am scheduled to graduate 3 months from now and I have landed my first IT position as an IT Technician.

Attending MyCC is positivity impacted life because of the setting the people. Everyone here is focused on your success, from the office administrator, instructors and career services department.
James Taylor III

The College of Health Care Professions
Fort Worth, Texas

My experience at The College of Health Care Professions (CHCP) has been the best experience ever. This is actually my second school I’ve been to since I graduated high school. I’ve accomplished so much with school as far as graduating and passing tests or quizzes that I thought I would fail. Getting to know certain people and making friends here at CHCP was a great experience. I remember it like it was yesterday, walking into class late as usual and seeing so many different faces like it was high school all over again. Weeks went by and I started to open up and make new friends in the Massage Therapy program as well as other programs. I felt like I was at home, because the school is that easy to get accustomed too. Military appreciation day was very fun as well, all of the veterans lined up and we walked down the halls. It was heartwarming to know that some people do care for the vets and what we had to accomplish while in the military. I will always remember CHCP and what they did for me and always recommend people to come here and get an education.
Neftali Marerro

Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Irving, Texas

My name is Neftali, better known as Talo. I served five years in the US Army as a 77F, and 97F (Petroleum Specialist). I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, but since getting out of the military I felt as if there was a necessary change to be made, so I moved to Texas in 2017. What lead me to AIM’s program was just a normal day watching TV and came across an AIM commercial. I got online and checked out the reviews, met with my recruiter, and the rest is history. The environment was what really lead me believe this was the place for me. Everyone was so helpful and had my best interest at heart. I’m still a current student, but what I enjoy most is that my classmates are always willing to help one another, and we never leave anyone helpless. I plan to graduate and make the best of what I have learned here by applying it to the skills that I have already developed from the military.
I am a 14 year, active duty veteran of the US Navy. I have been deployed to many different countries as well as combat zones while serving. I have been awarded many different awards and have moved up to the rank of Petty Officer Second Class before being discharged. I was released from the Navy and started my secondary education path. I first moved to Florida and obtained my Associates of Arts. Then shortly after that, I moved to Fort Worth, TX and decided to go into the medical field. I needed to obtain skills quickly so as to go forward with this plan. I researched colleges with medical training. CHCP was the first choice on the list and I then went to the campus and enrolled in the MA program. While in the MA program I am also serving in the US Army reserves. My ultimate goal is to go into the PA program within the Army. Having a background in the medical field at CHCP has opened a lot of doors for me. After obtaining my certification as an MA, I was lucky enough to get an interview at a Cardiologist clinic where I had worked for 6 months. I then took another job at a bigger facility making more money.

The College of Healthcare Professionals had helped me out a lot in defining my skills and grooming myself as a better Medical Assistant. I have also taken advantage of obtaining a second certification as an EKG technologist through the school as well. This helped me quite a bit in marketing myself as a more valuable employee. Right now I am currently finishing my Associates in Health Care Management and moving on towards starting my Bachelors in Health Care Management all through CHCP online. Thank you CHCP for everything that you have given me.
Antonio D Dillard

Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Dallas, Texas

In 1992 I was introduced to aviation as a 68N in the Army. After 13 years as an Avionics Technician I received my Structures Certification in 2005. After 10-12 years as a Structures Mechanic I enrolled in AIM and in 2018 I became a Structures Technician and secured employment at South West Airlines as a Senior Maintenance Planner.

Tiffany V. Owensby

The College of Health Care Professions
Houston, Texas

The College of Health Care Professions (CHCP) is a great school for future medical students especially veterans like me. After moving her in in June 2018 from Fort Bragg, NC I did the proper research for school to reach the goals I have in my sight. The staff goes above and beyond to ensure that the students succeed in our desired career courses, whether it be materials, modules, exams, and study materials. They have active instructors and staff that are easy to approach with any situation. It does not matter if it is school related or just having some personal issues going on. Most of the staff are very supportive and will go above and beyond their call of duty for the students. I am in the LMRT program which is 13 months with 21 weeks of externship at an outside site. As an Army veteran this college has helped me transition from military world to a civilian learning a new career/trade to better myself for my future occupation. Even the other students help each other out in pushing each other to do better and never give up. The classroom setting is like hoe. We work and study together in motivation, support, and uplifting one another when someone starts to slip or feel like giving up on. The radiology program that I am in has been one the best decisions I have ever made. My main focus now because I am almost complete with it is to get my degree in RT.
My name is Steven Midkiff. I am a veteran currently enrolled at Lincoln Tech in Grand Prairie, Texas. I chose a tech school because I’m just one of those people that isn’t a college person. Why take a bunch of classes that have nothing to do with what I’m trying to do with my life? Where does speech class make me a better mechanic? For me, the logical choice was to go to a tech school where I can learn to do a job instead of learn to pass a test or please a professor. Lincoln Tech has great instructors that are passionate about passing their collective knowledge to the next generation of technicians. The school supports veterans more than most colleges by acknowledging our sacrifice and service. They even gave us a Veteran Lounge where we can retreat to if we need to decompress a little or if we just need to eat lunch without random people surrounding us. Lincoln Tech also has a great career services department that works tirelessly to help students with job placement. Even after you graduate you still have help finding a job. Lose your job? No problem. Come by and I can almost guarantee that the ladies in career services know someone hiring. They’ll even help you write and send out your resume. As with the military though, you only get out what you put in. If you work hard and put in the effort, you will succeed.
I joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 2009 hoping to learn skills I could come back with. My entire experience in the military was tough. I remember the moments when I wanted to quit and go home. What I eventually learned from my experience is that reward are better earned through enduring the suffering that is presented. This is why I am proud to say I served in the armed forces. After completing my service, I worked as a warehouseman. However, the company was put for sale and my position not needed. Instead of waiting to be laid off I used my GI Bill® to go to back to school. During the time my wife enrolled in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography (DMS) program at The College of Health Care Professions (CHCP). I saw what she was doing was what I wanted to pursue. she reminded me of what enduring the suffering for an incredible reward took. Sonographers must understand what they are doing in order to help save lives. Since not everyone looks identical in an ultrasound, attention to detail is important. This is similar to what I was taught in the military. I have an amazing group of classmates, and the instructors are leaders we can look up to. The DMS program allows me to use the et of skills I learned in the military. The program is not easy, but I would not want it any other way because enduring that type of suffering is what makes the reward valuable.
Johnathan Miller

The College of Health Care Professions
Austin, Texas

There’s a quote that has never left me when I did a medical mission trip in Haiti, “it may feel like you can’t change the world, but you can change the world for someone.” It’s how I felt when coming to The College of Healthcare Professionals, making the ordinary feel extraordinary. No matter what walks of life CHCP is here so help you succeed.

I grew up in northern Idaho, have traveled the world, attended a few different colleges, and even did four years in USMC. What I like most about CHCP is that it’s an easy transition for former military members. We love fast pace, to be challenged, hands on training, it’s this type of environment that we thrive in. Better yet CHCP doesn’t give you a reason to fail. How many school do you know where you can text them whatever the issue and they will find the help you need or solution without you even getting out of a chair? You will never find this level of compassion or eagerness to give every student that walks through that door every opportunity to graduate and start their careers, at any traditional college. There’s no reason to fail, CHCP will never quit on you even if you quit on yourself.
I am Byanca, and I had the pleasure of serving in the US Navy for 7 years and 11 months. My rate was an Aviation Boatswain Mate Handler, which meant I was in control of all safety and movement of shipboard aircraft on board my command. What inspired me to attend AIM was the fact that there was a technical focus available with this program. There was no wait list, and the fact that there is a limited amount of aviation maintenance schools in the area it was the perfect fit. I’m in my first block and so far, and I am in love with the hands-on experience. I can apply my love for aviation to a career that can take me anywhere. You just can’t beat it!
Ashley Cleary

The College of Health Care Professions
Austin, Texas

The College of Healthcare Professionals has been so welcoming and helpful while transitioning into going back to school. I went into the army at 19 and was in for 7 years. I was born in raised in Phoenix, Arizona but have traveled to different states since joining the Army. I was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado for about 4 years and then I PCS’d to Fort Hood, Texas where I transitioned out of the Army in 2018. I have a beautiful family and 3 children. I decided to pursue my dreams in working in the medical field. CHCP was one of the top schools that was veteran friendly, which was a perfect choice for me. I am currently in the Medical Assistant program. All of the staff has been so supportive and so helpful in helping me get situated and cumulated back into the school scene. From admissions to career services to the teachers, these individuals care about your future as much as you! Working with financial aid to get my GI Bill® situated and set up was easier than I thought it would be. I am so glad that CHCP accepts the GI Bill® and works with veterans to utilize their benefits. The teachers are very knowledgeable and make diving back into school that much easier. I highly recommended CHCP if you are looking to have a positive atmosphere and getting yourself back into the swing of things!
Onazeen Vital

Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Houston, Texas

My name is Onazeen Vital. I am a Dental Assistant student at The College of Health Care Professions. I am also a United States Navy veteran. Words alone nearly cannot describe how much this institution has elevated the outlook on my professional life. I actually wanted to enter the military as a corpsman. Unfortunately my contract signing came at a bad time because upon entry I was told by superiors that the entire medical field was overpopulated. To my dismay, I was left with ultimatums. I chose to be an airman tech. Although aircraft maintenance is a promising path, I had absolutely no passion in acquiring more skills in that field. After getting injured in the military, I had an opportunity to return home. A year after being home and working an overnight civilian job I saw CHCP on television. I decided to go to the campus for a tour to see if it was the real deal, I wasn’t disappointed. It’s been nothing short of an amazing experience learning Dental Assistant skills from seasoned professionals. Real doctors with real specialties, sharing their knowledge. The military ended up being a blessing that helped me pay for school, and now I am headed to the field. I’m sure this is going to go down as one the best decisions I’ve made in my life.
Being a veteran is like a mystery box. For many of us, every day is a new challenge. I never know if I’m going to wake up feeling isolated or accepted by society. Even though I have been separated from the military service for a while, I still face the difficulties of the transition from military to civilian life. Sometimes we as veterans feel like a nuisance because of our Impatience, physical and mental injuries. Now, on the bright side of that mystery box I can wake up feeling accepted and that I been given the opportunity to do something that is constructive for my mind and my body. It gives me a mission and allows me to move forward in life.

After researching and evaluating my options, I chose The College of Healthcare Professionals as my college based on four criteria.

1. Academic- CHCP has a fantastic academic program available. Not only are the instructors intelligent and professional, they are also personable with real life experience.
2. Class size - Like many others, I feel like learn better in a smaller class environment.
3. Military/veteran support- CHCP offers a safe, welcoming place for veterans to include emotional support and financial aid regarding VA benefits.
4. Pride- CHCP shows pride in everything they do.
Before coming to America, I was a computer engineer in Nigeria, Africa. I came here in search of a meaningful career and was welcomed by the people of Las Vegas. Witnessing the support and healing of our community toward victims of the mass shooting was deeply moving. I want to give back to the community that welcomed me and has shown such humanity and support. To do this, I am becoming my truest version. I enrolled in nursing school just before enlisting in the military. The desire to serve others has always been with me, and I am drawn to nursing from caring for my grandmother who had Alzheimer's disease.

Nightingale College has been the right choice for me because I needed a nursing program that would accommodate my military service.

Friends of mine are veterans and have inspired and encouraged me because their life is on a direct path. Most veterans understand the end goal. Trying times build strength, when you go through challenges, they eventually pass. With experience and training, you can accomplish anything. This is what the military has taught me, and I bring this assurance to every part of my life.

Many people want to work in health care. There are more people who want to become nurses and yet there is such a need for more nurses. It took me so long to begin nursing school because it wasn’t an easy dream to put off. At first, I wasn’t sure if I could do both nursing school and military, but Nightingale College has worked to keep me on track and my Military Councilor, Lindsay Rasmussen, has been there every step of the way.

Pursuing nursing has forever changed my life. I hope my story helps veterans realize their dream.
Logan Sant

Nightingale College
Salt Lake City, Utah

Shoshone, Idaho is a small town where I grew up. I was the youngest of 6 children. I have lived and traveled to other cities and served a tour in Iraq. However, rural settings feel most like home for me. When I think about the future, I see me and my new bride, Amanda, living in a house with room for the children we will have, and at least a couple acres for a few animals.

At my nursing school graduation last year, I coordinated a surprise proposal to Amanda. This story would have turned out very differently if I had continued on my original path.

Nursing was the natural progression from my experience as an Army medic. A year after being honorably discharged I enrolled in a public institution in Twin Falls. A year and a half and many classes later I was still not placed in their nursing program. A co-worker was accepted immediately into Nightingale College’s nursing program, so I ran the numbers and discovered I would be able to graduate an entire year ahead of schedule if I transferred.

This was my preferred option because I am at a point in life where I do not have the luxury of time. Amanda and I are ready to purchase our own home and start a family. Like many veterans, I am self-driven and used to meticulous training. All nursing programs are most likely considered rigorous, but for me, the shorter option fit best with where I see my life in the next five years.

I am now a registered nurse and after eight years together, Amanda and I will get marry and plan our life together. Becoming a nurse, a year sooner has better served myself, my soon to be family and my community.
Toby Yarbrough

Centura College
Chesapeake, Virginia

Toby is a wounded warrior who suffered a traumatic brain injury serving our country. Following his injury, doctors were unsure if he would ever walk or talk again. With the help of his service dogs, Duke and Sasha, Toby did learn to walk and talk again---and he also earned his associate and bachelor degrees from Centura College! In addition to working in his field, Toby works tirelessly, advocating for wounded veterans and the resources available to them. He’s written a book which has recently been produced into a documentary to be of help and hope to other wounded warriors.
Keith Evans

IGLOBAL University
Vienna, Virginia

Keith retired from the U.S. Army in 1996, after serving 20 years. He decided to go to school and work while using his GI Bill® (Chapter 30). He chose to go into the education field, which he loves, and has continued to work in the for-profit education industry for many years. It is rewarding to assist an individual in changing their life through education.

The student makes the school, not the school making the student. I appreciated that I was able to choose the school I wanted to attend. The education benefit is earned and it is important that the veteran remain with the ability to choose where he or she wants to attend.

For profit schools receive a lot of negative attention, but there are traditional schools which have many of the same issues, they are just not spoken or written about as often.

Much of the hoopla is surrounded by tuition, for profit schools, in some cases is higher, but you have to understand, the for profit sector does not receive tax dollars or huge endowments to offset the cost of tuition.

If the intention is to clean up the system, then clean up all, not just one sector. I believe that is the responsibility of the Department of Education, and the accrediting bodies approved by the Department of Education.

Measure each school on its own merits, not the failures of others. Preserve the right to choose.
Oscar Rodriquez

Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Manassas, Virginia

Born in El Salvador; Oscar, at the age of 12, immigrated to the Washington D.C., metropolitan area with his family. Oscar is the youngest of four siblings and a son of a single mom who struggled financially to provide for her family. Once in the U.S. Oscar knew, one way to succeed was to enlist in the military. He joined the United States Marine Corps. Oscar served five years in VMAQ-4 where he worked on EA/6B Prowlers, deployed to Afghanistan, was promoted to Sergeant and most importantly developed a passion for Aviation.

After transitioning from the Corps, Oscar decided to pursue Aviation and elected to attend the Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Manassas, Virginia. He selected AIM-Manassas because of the quality of instructors, and the professional networking. Oscar graduated from AIM in 2015 as a member of the Alpha Beta Kappa Honor Society and Magna Cum Laude. Soon after, he obtained his A&P license.

Oscar currently works for SpaceX as a Mechanism Technician on the Dragon capsule. The capsule is a reusable spacecraft designed to launch into space by the Falcon 9 two-stage-to-orbit launch vehicle. SpaceX is revolutionizing the industry, as it manufactures, launches and maintains spaceships with an ultimate goal to provide space travel to other planets. Oscar’s life has dramatically changed from the kid from El Salvador. He is a graduate of the Manassas, Aviation Institute of Maintenance, a certified Aviation Maintenance Technician, and maintains SpaceX spacecraft.
My name is Elizabeth and I am retired active duty of 23+ years. I graduate in three months from the Massage Therapy school at Fortis College and I already have a job lined up. And that job offer was solely because I will be a graduate of Fortis ... specifically Fortis.

Apparently Fortis puts its students through much more hands-on practice than the other schools. I am so kicking myself for 28 months of my GT Bill throughout my career, taking classes towards a 4 year degree that never happened. All I have to show for my 14+ credits are obsolete transcripts. The 2 year and 4 year schools refused to accept them back because they were too old. So imagine my delight when I came across a 9 month school with a track record offer for employment placing even before graduation.

The owner of my spa overheard that I was going to Fortis and told me that if I wanted a job after graduation, to make an appointment to see him. He said, "I will select a Fortis Graduate over any other for the simple reason that your graduates are energetic, confidant, knowledgeable, and well-versed in giving massages."
Robert C. Isabella

ECPI
Virgina Beach, Virginia

After I retired from the U.S. Army I started looking into schools that I could attend. I had already transferred some of my G.I. Benefits to my family, which meant I needed to find a school that could fit my reduced timeline. I choose ECPI based on speaking with past and present students and ECPI’s “Military Friendly” reputation. The accelerated program at ECPI allowed me to complete my degree debt free, by fitting into the time constraints of my remaining on my G.I. Bill and VocRehab benefits.

My experience at ECPI was a lot like most of the academic training I attended while on Active Duty; fast paced and direct. I never felt like my instructors were trying to stall for time or trying to drag the class out; it was definitely a “quality over quantity” mindset. Since the terms are only five weeks there is not a lot of time spent repeating the same material over and over again; but the instructors were always available if I needed any additional instruction or clarification. I always felt like the instructors genuinely cared about my success; not only during their particular class but throughout my time at ECPI.

After graduation I spent almost six months helping a friend expand his personal business into new sectors and streamlining his billing practices. After that I applied to and was hired to be a Military Admissions Advisor for ECPI.
Brittany Monroe

Bryant & Stratton College
Virginia Beach, Virginia

I am currently ending my second and will soon begin my third semester at Bryant & Stratton College Virginia Beach campus. Transitioning to the civilian sector was not easy for me after I had to medically retire from the US Navy after eight years of service. However, my admissions rep, Latoya, made the transition very smooth. She worked with me around the clock to make sure I had everything I needed to be ready for my first day in the nursing program. The nursing director, Tara, has been nothing but awesome, with her background and experience making my first two semesters here enjoyable and full of learning opportunities. The science and nursing departments both have great instructors, and I have been able to pull from past experiences and my knowledge as a US Navy Corpsman to help me get this far.

Being able to give back to my school by working as a student employee in the Vet Center gives me my greatest joy, and I am honored to continue to serve my brothers and sisters in the armed forces. But ultimately, I would not have made it without the family I have built here at Bryant & Stratton. The atmosphere at Bryant & Stratton College is so supportive that it’s hard NOT to be successful here!
Danny Jeter

Centura College
Richmond, Virginia

Danny is a United States Navy veteran that served 5 years as an engine man. Danny was assigned to the U.S.S. Ashland maintaining and operated the ship’s air supply, water supply and ships power distribution. Of course, while serving in the United States Navy, Danny was able to travel and see the world. After leaving, the military Danny worked for various companies and was unsure of what direction he wanted to choose for his next career. However, one day, Danny decided to return a call from one of our Centura College Admissions Representatives that peaked his interest. The call was regarding our new Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning Program offered at the campus. Danny scheduled an interview and the next thing he realizes orientation soon followed and on Monday he was starting classes. The transition was smooth and not as stressful as he anticipated regarding Financial Aid and the entire admissions process. Danny unfortunately did not have his drivers license, due to some fines accrued and sought assistance from Student Services on bus schedules and routes. A plan was mapped out for him to leave work and utilize public transportation in order to get to school. The wrinkle in the plan was utilizing his bicycle in terms of getting to school considering the bus he was to catch directly for school ran at sporadic schedules. However, Danny made the best of this situation and that military perseverance helped him a great deal. Danny would arrive to school in the most inclement weather in order to make it to class. However, Danny credits his family and members of the school as the “best support team ever” for his success. Prior to school Danny worked at Trinity Family Life Center in a building maintenance capacity. Today, Danny is still employed with Trinity Family Life Center but now holds the title of Maintenance Engineer. In the words of Danny “I’ve actually finished something I started on the spur of the moment. HVAC school has challenged me but believe me it is possible. Everything happens for a reason.”
Patrick L. Garduno
ECPI
Virginia Beach, Virginia

ECPI just gets it! I was not looking forward to attending traditional college when I retired from the military; my past experiences left me frustrated and taken advantage of. Traditional colleges always left me feeling lost, as if I was a number, and getting the classes I needed was a frustrating process. With ECPI, I can say "They just get it!". They make going to school easy and enjoyable. The school is structured for you to succeed. I enjoy the personal service I receive; I don’t have to worry about a class getting canceled or only offered when I am unavailable. At ECPI, all I have to do is concentrate on my studies, because I know the staff works hard at taking care of all the administrative items for me, from my GI Bill® to scheduling classes. If there is a problem, they find multiple ways to contact you. It’s not uncommon to have a Professor call you if they haven’t heard from you on the first day of class. I don’t feel like a number. The school just gets it, from electronic books to electronic submission of papers. I receive instant feedback on most quizzes and test. Having immediate results helps me judge my understanding of the material and what areas I may need to study.
Larry Bender

Centura College
Virginia Beach, Virginia

As I continued to land jobs with mediocre pay and strenuous labor, I knew I had to do make a change. I was tired of being an employee that had more experience than some managers. It was only because I lacked college education to get the position I wanted. That is when I decided to step up and go back to college.

I served in the United States Army for nearly ten years as a Supply Sergeant. As a Quartermaster, the training built a foundation in logistics. I decided to continue to build on that foundation by choosing an education in Business Management. I then needed a college to give me the best education for my career. Centura College really caught my attention. I had a very pleasant conversation with an Admissions Representative. I was informed of the benefits of attending school, as well as, the flexible hours they offered. I scheduled an appointment to meet with the school and decided to enroll in Centura College.

I chose Centura College because of several different reasons. I like how the classes are accelerated to help you achieve your degree in less time than traditional schools. I have greatly enjoyed the different clubs and honor societies available. For example, National Technical Honor Society is an association for those with academic achievements and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) is a club that provides leadership opportunities and gives back to our local community.

I am now less than one week away from graduating with my Bachelor’s Degree in Management. My overall experience here at Centura College has been a blessing. I would definitely recommend this school to active duty, veterans, or anyone looking to further their education.
My name is Edgar. I was in the Navy after being a member of the Civil Air Patrol (USAF AUX) for about 8 years. After getting out of the service, the economy was definitely not what anyone would call stable. I worked jobs on contracts simply because I was a veteran and companies knew I would show up to work and work. After a year or two of constantly working a contract for a few months just to have to start again somewhere else (because no one wanted to give benefits) I looked at what I wanted to do in the future to have stability. That led me to finding Fortis and entering the massage therapy program. I chose Massage therapy because self care had been a core component of my routine when I was on duty to keep myself performing and having the ability to help others in this way gives life a sense of purpose, with an added benefit of work stability.

My time at Fortis was life changing because I had teachers that have been in this profession for over 20 years and have a vested interest in helping people succeed, and this has put me in a position of having a new career. Now instead of constantly having to worry about when the job will end, now I can think about what I want to do with life and plan for a future because of the support network and starting platform that I gained while attending Fortis.
My journey at Centura College started back in June 2017. I graduated with my Associates of Occupational Science Degree in Informational Technology in September 2018. After graduating, I decided to return for my Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management. My experience at Centura College has been nothing short of amazing. The administration staff and instructors take such pride and joy in knowing they help guide young adults to become better than they were the day before. I’ve stated once before that I believe as a student at Centura College you don’t just earn a degree, but Centura College helps you think, create, learn, and grow towards a better future, career, and life. I am grateful for the opportunity Centura College has given me and I am excited for what the future holds instore.
My name is Kaitlyn; I grew up in Spokane, Washington, and blossomed into an adult in Flower Mound, Texas where I decided to join the U.S. Navy after High School. I served my country for 4 and a half years, with the amazing opportunity to visit fifteen different countries and even lived abroad in Rota, Spain where I discovered my passion for emergency medical services as a stretcher bearer aboard the USS Porter, DDG 78.

Shortly after my honorable discharge from service, I was struggling to obtain employment in the medical field due to my lack of education and experience. While I was searching online for ways to improve my employability, Fortis College contacted me with an interesting offer. They met with me in a timely manner offering me a chance to do exactly what I was searching for. A week later I was a student within their halls. Now, March 20, 2019, I am a couple weeks from starting my externship-- part of the program that allows the opportunity to prove education and gain experience on the job-- and I feel confident and excited to start this new journey as a medical professional with hopes to always learn more about helping people and saving lives.
Dalton Frost
Tidewater Tech
Norfolk, Virginia

Dalton discussed his transition from the service to a civilian and his overall experience with Tidewater Tech sharing “Transitioning from the military was easier than people make it seem. I had a plan set in place and executed it when my time was up. While my Service experience wasn’t related to trades, it was during my enlistment where I was first exposed to welding and that struck my initial interest. After completing my enlistment in 2017 I enrolled into the HVAC Program and then BMR. I’ve enhanced my own personal knowledge and skills in so many ways and when I complete the Welding Program I aim to utilize those skills to enhance the productivity of my shop as well as assist my friend who’s building a new home. I have soaked up so much knowledge, met a lot of good instructors, developed many friendships, and built a solid network to further build off of. I believe the hands-on experience I had in the Service helped me better transition into a Trades school setting as opposed to a four year college. Tidewater Tech is a great school and I am glad to have chosen this academic path.”
Amanda Watcon

Centura College
Norfolk, Virginia

When I left the U. S. Navy I left behind a major part of my life, for over twelve years I was told what to wear, to do and where to be. One morning I woke up to discover a newfound freedom. I had the ability to decide what I wanted to do with the rest of my future. I found Centura College while looking at local schools in my area.

Centura College - Norfolk offered so many different programs with an accelerated curriculum. I would have the ability to study under instructors with many years of experience. The school gave me my structure back of being at a certain place at a certain time and having to complete assignments on time. My classmate became like my small intimate family. The transition was the most difficult due to learning how to deal with so many personalities and opinions.

The small class sizes made it very easy to get that little extra nudge of getting over a hurdle. The teachers never let me give up when a problem seemed to be difficult to solve. They were always there to give me real life scenarios. Centura College helped me regain my passion for learning.
My name is Kayla and I was an aviation machinist mate third class in the U.S. Navy. After pursuing a bachelor’s degree in psychology at Regent University I realized I wanted to get an education through a different avenue. Fortis offered what I wanted, which was an education with a clear and tangible goal of securing a job and career in dental assisting. Dental assisting offers me a challenging and fast paced career field which is what I need after being in the fast paced setting of the military. With this certification I can take this career anywhere my husband goes while he is still serving in the military, whether that be stateside or overseas. I can only thank my teachers, Ms. Freeman and Ms. Ruiz for pushing me forward and guiding myself and my fellow students to success and a great career.
Natasha Chaparro

Centura College
Norfolk, Virginia

Centura College was the first educational experience outside of the military where I really felt I could succeed. Here with the small classroom structure, flexible schedule, administrator support, and hands on learning; I was able to grow into an amazing medical assistant. The instructors here have a keen interest in seeing their students succeed throughout the program. The team building and friendships that are formed here last even after graduation; inspiring new students to continue down the path of higher education.

Centura has not only provided me with a platform to build on my academics but assisted me with continuing to grow professionally. My time at Centura has allowed me to reflect on areas where I may need to grow and develop personally but has also presented opportunities for me to generate growth professionally as well. Centura’s approach to assisting individuals with their growth, complimented my military training; making me a more confident, much more marketable healthcare professional. I am just as proud and honored to be a part of the Centura family as I am to have served my country.
Jami Al Amal

Tidewater Tech
Norfolk, Virginia

When asked what brought Jami to the Welding Program and about his experience here at Tidewater Tech, he shared “Back in 2015, me and a buddy of mine in Colorado built a smoker from scratch, out of scraps and a water heater. It sparked a creative interest in being able to play with metal and create anything you want out of it. Then I began seeking career opportunities linked to welding and it was the financial opportunity that I was looking for transitioning out of the service to civilian life. Coming here to Tidewater Tech I now can say I understand the actual process of welding in depth, where prior to school I literally knew nothing when I first encountered it.

Now, after sitting through seven months of courses I can enjoy the actual technical aspect as to how I’ve learned everything hands-on. I now know various welding processes and have gained confidence in my abilities which has been absolutely instrumental and has truly confirmed for me that I know I should be a welder. This is absolutely what I want to do. I would definitely recommend this program to anyone seeking a fun, stable career, and the staff are extremely helpful and friendly”.
My name is Carla Henry. I live in Fredericksburg, VA. I am a veteran of the United States Navy and I was a Hospital Corpsman for eight years. I chose Fortis College in Richmond to continue my education using my GI Bill®. I chose Fortis because of its location and curriculum. My experience at Fortis was beyond my expectations. The education and training I received there was pragmatic and comprehensive. My education there thoroughly prepared me for my new field. I am now an active Licensed Massage Therapist. When I speak with other therapists that attended other schools, I find that my education at Fortis was as good if not better than other institutions. Becoming an LMT has enriched my life personally and professionally. I learned how to help and take care of myself as well as others. Being a Massage Therapist is not unlike being a Hospital Corpsman in that I still am able to help others in a unique and personal way. I seek out opportunities to help veterans especially. My parents, who are also veterans, were proud of my success and have benefited from my new skills gained at Forts. I’m very excited about my new career and I am proud to be a graduate and the valedictorian of my graduating class at Fortis College Richmond. I was so pleased and impressed by the academics at Fortis that I am currently enrolled in another one of their programs. This time for Sterile Processing Technician. Already I feel that this program will be a catalyst to many great opportunities.
Dennis Wolterding
Tidewater Tech
Norfolk, Virginia

Dennis shared his educational experience transitioning from the service after 30 years, 2 months, and 13 days of service. “I had two jobs after retiring, then due to medical reasons I was forced to seek alternative career options. I started out with Barber School, then Massage Therapy, then came to Tidewater Tech. I’ve gained great new skills. I just moved my daughter out and was able to easily install mounts and maintain her vehicle. I now know how to fix, build, and maintain things I never could before. This has been great and I would recommend it to anyone and everyone who wants to make a living or just wants to obtain knowledge.

Don’t make yourself a hostage to others who have the information when you can learn it yourself. The staff and instructors here are the best, they are all true professionals. Subject matter experts. From national building to learning how to build for myself, to building homes, and now to service vehicles, it has been a total game changer. After graduation I am a husband, father, grandfather, and proud to say the only job I have is to enjoy my family.”
My name is Karlisa Wade. Being in the military for eleven years then becoming medically retired was a big change for me. The thought of finding a new career and starting over seemed scary. I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I just knew that I wanted a career that would be a service to all people. So, I started looking for schools with programs that would allow me to have the type of career that I was looking for. Finding Fortis College and enrolling into their Dental Assistant program changed my life. I am now on my way to a career field that I love.

The staff at Fortis made it very easy and painless to enroll into the program which helped take away the fear of starting over. With the class schedule that I have I am able to continue to be there for my family without disturbing their daily schedule.
Meaghan grew up in a military family with a Senior Chief Electronics Technician father working on Navy submarines. After she graduated high school Meaghan enlisted in the US Navy in 2009. Meaghan was an E5 Aviation Electrician’s Mate and was involved in the 2nd Class Petty Officer’s Association. She honorably separated in 2015. In April 2018 she began at the Aviation Institute of Maintenance-Chesapeake, VA to pursue her personal goal of continuing to work on aircraft.

Meaghan’s success on campus is directly related to her dedication. She was dedicated to her Navy career path and that perseverance has proven useful in her student career. While working on her Aviation Maintenance Certification, Meaghan has maintained a 4.0 GPA. She is a VA work-study student at the campus’ Veterans Resource Center and is the Secretary for the Student Veterans Organization on campus. She’s been awarded with AIM’s Perfect Attendance and Honor Roll multiple time since she started. Meaghan is also a single parent who works to encourage her son’s love of aviation!

She is expected to graduate December 2019 and, after receiving her Airframe & Powerplant license, wants to pursue a career with the National Transportation Safety Board on their accident investigation and prevention team. Her training at the Aviation Institute of Maintenance, along with her Navy career, will make her a great candidate for her future career path. She’s a student and a Veteran, and she’s succeeding in school!
I was medically retired from the Army in 2018 after 11 years of service. My plan had always been to serve 20 years, and I had no backup. After transitioning out of the Army, I switched from job to job – but never felt like I fit in. I had the experience everyone was looking for, but I lacked a degree to go beyond the entry-level positions.

In June 2018, my wife told me she was pregnant. My son would be due in January 2019. I suddenly needed to get my life together and stop floating around. By December I felt the pressure and began to look at what I needed to be successful. I grew up hearing about Bryant & Stratton College; I live 10 minutes from the campus and had driven by it several times. I researched the school and its class sizes, degree programs, and the career-focused programs. This made me feel it would be the best choice.

I applied online and received a call very quickly from the incredible staff. I made an appointment and was given all the information I needed to decide. The admissions team, finance team, and advisors were phenomenal. I was in uncharted territory and worried I wouldn’t be successful. The staff helped me through every step and made my transition to student life easy. I went from being a retired and lost veteran with no goal in life to being a new father with a solid plan and ideas on how to be successful.

My class schedule gives me time to be with my newborn son and to focus on schoolwork. I am glad I chose Bryant & Stratton College. I am excited to come to class and learn and I’m confident that my future is secure.
Johnny Trinidad

Aviation Institute of Maintenance
Chesapeake, Virginia

Johnny was born in Humaucou, Puerto Rico and grew up in New York. He joined the Navy as an Aviation Machinists Mate where he worked on Hornet and Tomcat jets. He got out of the Navy in 2003. In 2006 Johnny received a cancer diagnosis. He began a long decade of chemo-therapy and treatment. Through it all, Johnny was the person in the hospital trying to make others laugh. It took more than cancer to bring down his spirits.

In 2016, Johnny was ready to kick-start his student career! Since he enjoyed his role in the Navy, he enrolled in the Aviation Institute of Maintenance to become an Aviation Maintenance Technician. He took his military knowledge of jets and applied it towards his studies at the campus. His favorite part of being in school was “Taking what you learn in the classroom and immediately applying those skills in the hangar.” During his time in class he was dedicated to finishing the program and helping others do the same. He was an active member of the Student Veterans Organization and participated in community service events.

Johnny graduated with his AMT certificate and his FAA Airframe & Powerplant license in 2018. That same year, he was offered an instructor position at his campus. His years working on Navy aircraft along with a 3.89 GPA made him a great candidate for the education team at AIM. He enjoys seeing the look on his students’ faces when they grasp a concept for the first time. He says, “It’s wonderful being able to see both sides of education, the student side and the instructor side.” Johnny is a relatable instructor because of being a veteran and as a graduate of the program. He is an inspiring veteran and is doing great things!
Lindsey Knowles of the US Army entered our Welding program at Charter College with determination to develop a trade where she could continue to make the impact she wanted on the world. After graduating with a 4.0, Lindsey worked for Charter College as a Welding Teacher’s Assistant then was offered a position at Greenberry. Lindsey truly enjoyed her time at Charter College and when an adjunct position became available a couple of years later, she joined our instructional staff. When the Lead Welding instructor position became available, Lindsey jumped at the opportunity. Currently, she is our Lead Welding instructor and is driven to develop the best trained welders in our community. In her time at Charter College, she has developed a strong sense of purpose for assisting our students toward a successful and lucrative career. We currently have more women enrolled in our welding program than we have in the past, and Lindsey is working to better impact our community through development and planning of our May 4th, 2019 weld-off competition. She has visited local high schools, locked-in two CWI volunteer judges, gathered donations from local companies including tools and equipment for the winners, as well as developed strong relationships with the American Welding Society. All of this could not have been possible without her training at Charter College.
At the age of 15, I knew I wanted to serve others. I joined the U.S. Air Force when I was 18 and spent 27 years serving this country. Upon retiring from the military, I elected to return to school for Respiratory Therapy. My mother was a Respiratory Therapist, and I enjoyed her stories about how she had helped not only the patients, but the patients’ families during their time of need.

I heard a commercial on the radio about Pima Medical Institute, and three days later I completed my entrance test and was accepted for a class. Upon finishing school, I started working at a level two trauma hospital, and then I moved to a level 1 trauma hospital that also took care of children. I felt blessed to have the opportunity to help students from PMI as an instructor while I worked at the hospitals. This gave me the feeling of giving back to the school from which I graduated.

I also continued setting educational goals, completing my master’s degree in Health Care Administration and beginning part-time work for PMI as a clinical instructor. In December 2017, I returned to the Renton Campus, the same one from which I graduated just seven years earlier, as a full-time instructor. PMI not only helped me achieve my professional goals, they have helped me realize my personal goals through my educational development. Moreover, they have given me the opportunity to be a positive role model for my children while providing them with a higher quality of life.
Brandon A. Pullen
Charter College
Fife, Washington

Shortly after graduation high school in 2006 I enlisted in the United States Army. I was assigned to the 307th Expeditionary Signal Battalion out of Honolulu, HI. I have been deployed to Iraq 8 times and 9 times to Afghanistan in my 10-year career. During my deployment I was attached to the 25th Infantry Division Calvary Scouts. The Scouts were called the “Life Savers” of the Military Service Members. I have had the opportunity to help save over 147 lives.

My last and final deployment was to Kandahar, Afghanistan with the 25th ID. On August 8th, 2015 I drove over a 200-pound copper infused bomb or IED. This bomb folded my vehicle in half. My body was almost folded in half. By the time I was Medevacked out I was not breathing, and I had flat-lined for about 47 seconds.

The day I came to in the hospital in Germany my report was very scary. I broke 114 bones in my body to include both hands, right arm, right femur, right knee, right shin, right ankle, 3 ½ feet of my small intestine had been bruised. I also snapped my pelvis bone in three different areas, and I was told I would never walk again. After about 47 different operations and 15 months of therapy, and my willpower to fight and never giving up on myself, I started my new life that I have today.

I have chosen Charter College and the amazing Pharmacy Tech program for two main reasons. Reason one because of my youngest daughter’s heart condition that requires open heart surgeries every 3 years. Being able to learn and know the different effects of medications I can and will become more in tune with her doctors and her. My second reason for wanting to become a Pharmacy Tech has to do with helping and taking care of people’s needs or medical issues that are needing a certain type of medication.
I served in the US Marine Corps for 4 years and participated in the 1991 Gulf War. After my honorable discharge I worked at a casino as a dealer, pit boss and then shift manager, but smoke allergies ended any chance of continuing in that field. I began working as an auditor, but I wanted a new career. My girlfriend graduated from Pima Medical Institute and she suggested I check out the Dental Assistant program and I enrolled. Going back to school after 30 years was very intimidating, but both of my instructors were encouraging and made it easier for me. One of my biggest challenges was getting to class on time each morning since I was working as a night auditor. I met great people who helped me when I needed it. Most importantly, PMI gave me a new career.

I was able to complete my externship at the Pima Hygiene Clinic and even worked there for a time while waiting for my position with the VA. I am currently working for the Veterans Administration in Mt. Vernon, Washington. Being a former veteran myself, it was a goal of mine to help other veterans. Once I am able to gain more experience, my eventual goal would be to come back to PMI as an instructor.

I would like to say “Thank You” to everyone at PMI – from the campus director to my instructors. If it were not for them, I would not be where I am today – enjoying my new career as a Dental Assistant.

Troy Hetland
Pima Medical Institute
Seattle, Washington