

EXPLORING OPTIONS

Alternative educational programs can help maximize GI Bill benefits

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

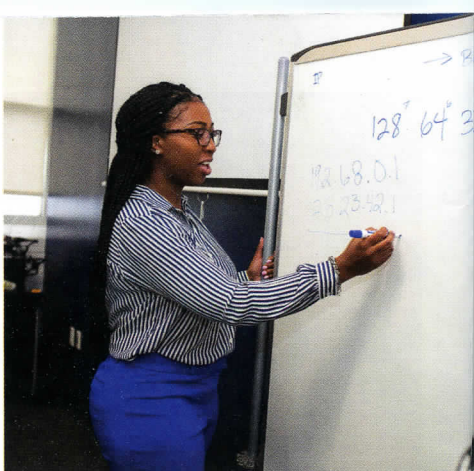
College may not be for everyone, but veterans and troops transitioning to civilian life also have access to a variety of programs that use or expand GI Bill benefits for a variety of alternative educational programs, particularly in high-demand science and technology fields.

One such program, NPower, is a national non-profit that offers free technology and IT training programs across New York, New Jersey, Texas, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, and California. The NPower program is open to veterans, their spouses, and young adults ages 18-26 years old. The program gives them six to nine months of training in IT and technology, paid apprenticeships, and career mentoring.

NPower also works in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), where it provides cyber security training to active military who are transitioning into civilian life.

The company reports that close to 7,000 people have graduated from the program with an 82% percent graduation rate; and 81% of those graduates get jobs or continue their education. Graduates earn an average salary of \$63,365 after completing programs in areas like cyber-security, coding, cloud, NAS, and ESM.

"NPower is always looking to place veterans into our free tech, IT and cyber security training programs," explains Jonathan Pride, executive director of NPower Texas. "We have partnered with the Department of Defense, Homeland Security



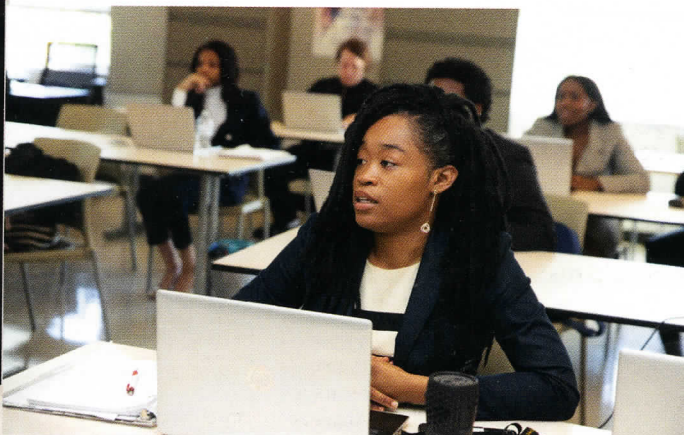
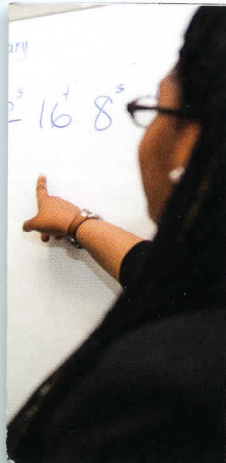
and major corporations, helping them find diverse tech talent for their job openings. Veterans don't need to use their GI bill for any of our programs. We encourage any veteran interested to look us up."

One of the unique features of the NPower program is that it is free: the program is funded by grants, major corporations, private companies and the government. Participating students receive laptops for their work during the semester and are paid to learn under apprenticeships. For more information or to apply, visit the NPower website at <https://www.npower.org/apply/>.

Another program that also focuses on technology training is the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC), which is run through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VET TEC pairs separating troops and veterans with leading training providers to develop the skills necessary for a technology career. The VET TEC program provides tuition for a full-time high-tech training program. It also provides a housing allowance for participants no longer serving on active duty.


VET TEC training covers a range of technology careers, including computer software, computer programming, data processing, information science, and media applications. The program is open





9/11 GI Bill or dependents using the Fry Scholarship to get added benefits. This scholarship provides up to nine months – or \$30,000 – of benefits for training in high-demand fields. Students enrolled in an undergraduate STEM degree program or those with a STEM degree working toward a teaching certification are eligible.

The scholarship can be used in a variety of undergraduate degree programs, including agriculture science or natural resources science; biological or biomedical science; computer and information science and support services; engineering, engineering technologies, or an engineering-related field; health care or a health-care-related field; mathematics or statistics; undergraduate medical residency; physical science; and science technologies or technicians. To apply or for more information, visit: <https://www.va.gov/education/other-va-education-benefits/stem-scholarship/apply-for-scholarship-form-22-10203/introduction>.

Another VA program open to veterans, spouses and dependents is the Yellow Ribbon Program, which can help pay for higher out-of-state, private school or graduate school tuition that the Post-9/11 GI Bill doesn't cover. Participants must qualify for the post-9/11 GI Bill at the 100% benefit level and be enrolled at a participating school in order to qualify. For more information, visit: <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11/yellow-ribbon-program/>. 

to service members who are within 180 days of separating from active duty, who qualify for VA education assistance under the GI Bill, and who have a least one day of unexpired GI Bill entitlement; participants also must be accepted into a program by a VA-approved training provider. For more information or to apply, visit the VA website at: <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/vetec-high-tech-program/apply-for-vetec-form-22-0994/introduction>.

There are also several VA programs and scholarships designed to help veterans maximize their GI Bill benefits. For example, the Edith Nourse Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Scholarship allows eligible veterans using the Post-