



MAJOR CHOICE

A look at the most popular degree programs selected by college-bound veterans and why these are a good fit

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

Many veterans and active-duty troops transitioning to civilian life choose to pursue a college education, but the myriad degree programs available can make those choices seem a bit overwhelming. Choosing the right degree can have a huge impact on future career growth and earning power; therefore, veteran students have a powerful incentive to pick a path that takes advantage of the skills and discipline they acquired during military service.

"Veterans, who have been trained to perform vital duties in defense of our country, have a lot to offer potential employers, but sometimes it isn't enough to make it in the civilian job

market," states Best Colleges Online, (www.bestcollegesonline.org) a leading ranking organization and information resource about colleges and degree programs. "After serving in the military, education offers the opportunity to take a step up the ladder and position oneself for a solid career."

Similarly, the online portal, Veteran.com, points out, "As veterans leave military service, many choose to use their GI Bill benefits to attend school. In doing so, they face the challenge of figuring out what makes the most sense to study."

The key to choosing a major is to take into account past experiences, interests, and overall career goals. Here are some of the top degree programs that are proving popular with many veterans:

Engineering

Technical careers in various fields of engineering can be extremely well-paying and secure. There are numerous types of engineering degrees, including chemical engineering, leading to a career in the energy, manufacturing, biotechnology, medicine, or environmental fields; civil engineering, for a career in infrastructure, construction, or development; and mechanical engineering, which presents opportunities in manufacturing, designing and building machines, and equipment.

Computer Science

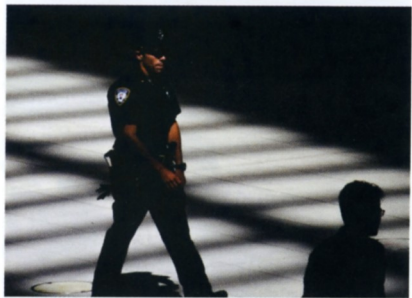
Virtually every major industry needs highly skilled, computer-savvy individuals who understand the fundamentals of computer science. Careers in the computer science field include programing, coding, software development, digital network administration, and information security, also known as cyber- security, one of today's most rapidly growing fields.

Criminal Justice

Many veterans have the experience, background, and skills to transition to civilian law enforcement, and acquiring a criminal justice degree can enhance the opportunities for employment, job security, and advancement.

Emergency Medical Technician/ Paramedic

Military service often requires dealing with emergency situations, especially life-and-death scenarios where quick decision-making is imperative. A career as an EMT or paramedic can translate this knowledge into a practical and high-paying career.





Nursing

Many military personnel are trained in basic medical skills and therefore have some foundational knowledge for a career in nursing. Healthcare is a growing industry with a chronic shortage of trained professionals, and nurses enjoy good pay and excellent job security.



Physical Therapy

All those drills in boot camp may have led to more than a few sore muscles, strains and sprains over the years, giving veterans an intimate knowledge of the effects of strenuous exercise. Similar to nursing, there is an ongoing shortage of qualified physical therapists, and therefore this is a career path in demand.



Fire Engineering/Fire Science

Like a career in law enforcement, becoming a firefighter can utilize the experience, skills, and background gained through military service. Having a fire engineering or fire science degree provides more opportunities for advancement.



Teaching

The work ethic, patience, and perseverance instilled during military service are a perfect match for the qualities required in a teacher. Although not as high paying as some other fields, teaching is a satisfying and rewarding career path that has a tremendous impact on future generations.



Business

Many of the qualities learned during military service—planning, organization, leadership, strategy—are prized by the business world. Degrees in business administration or corporate management can provide numerous opportunities in virtually any field of interest. 