

Read this first!

I Don't Know a Thing about Going to College!



Your Army Education Guide on College



THINGS TO KNOW AND ASK ABOUT

❖ **Keep it simple**

You may want to complete a bachelor's degree (four-year degree) in something, but you are here at Fort Drum, so you may need or want to start with colleges that offer an associate degree instead (half of a bachelor's degree-two years).

❖ **Ask questions and questions to think about**

What is the college's accreditation? What is a degree plan and does the college offer the one you want? How best do you learn? Do you need face-to-face instruction or are you disciplined enough to handle online?

❖ **What does it cost?**

What is the cost of tuition? How much are books? What are the fees? What is financial aid and can it help me pay the costs? Do you know what the maximum numbers are for tuition assistance?

❖ **Refresher classes**

It has been years since I attended school or I my grades were not as high as I would have liked. What will the college do to help me?

❖ **What are college classes like?**

Read everything you receive from your college and instructor. Read the college catalog. It will explain the degrees and class descriptions, talk about college policy and other rules and responsibilities. Yes, it will be overwhelming sometimes, but you must learn to take ownership of your education. The class syllabus will show you everything you will need to do for the class (reading requirements, papers, exams). College is not like high school. You take a particular class for 8-15 weeks and never take it again. It can move along very quickly with papers and other requirements due at the end of the class. Study daily. Take careful notes. Keep up with your reading and homework. Buddy up! You are responsible for turning in all assignments even when you are out sick, or other reasons you may need to miss the class.

What is the process to attend college?

There are two processes to attending college; one, apply to the college and two, pay for it. (You do not have to wait to be accepted to a college to apply for financial aid.)

1. **Applying** to any college starts with the Admissions Office. They are the office who admits you to the college. Normally, you fill out an application, request official high school transcripts from your high school guidance office, request official transcripts from any college registrar or records office you have previously attending, and schedule an appointment with Admissions to ask general questions, take a tour of the campus, speak with faculty and students in your degree.

Here at Fort Drum, our college representatives in the Education Center, will act as the Admissions Office to assist you in all ways. Once you have processed through **ArmyIgnitED** and are admitted to the college, you may be required to take a college placement test to place you in the correct English and Math class. You will then be scheduled to come in and register for college classes that are part of your degree plan. An advisor from the college will be assigned to you to help you complete your degree requirements for graduation. **(Your college representative on Drum will be your advisor).**

2. **Paying** for college is next. All college students are encouraged to apply for financial aid at the www.fafsa.ed.gov website (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Financial aid is composed of grants and scholarships (money you do not pay back), college work study positions (part-time work at the college), and student loans (money you DO pay back over time). You will apply for your financial aid EVERY YEAR after you file your income tax returns. The application is sent from the FAFSA website to your college (about 48 hours later) and your college's financial aid director will determine what you qualify for in grants, scholarships, work positions and loans. You may also look outside the college for private scholarships at a variety of websites such as: www.studentaide.ed.gov; www.fafsa.ed.gov; www.finaid.org; www.scholarshipamerica.org; www.scholarships.com; www.fastweb.com; and www.military.com/scholarship/ . Don't forget to apply for MGIB or POST 911 benefits at: www.vets.gov if you will soon be out of the military.

Since you may be an active duty Soldier here at Drum, you may apply for FAFSA and tuition assistance program through ArmyIgnitED. Most scholarships are awarded if you will be a full-time student, which is rare for our active duty Soldiers.

Spouses may qualify for MyCAA, a Dept. of Defense-sponsored program to aid spouses in obtaining career-based, two-year degree, certification, and licensure. Check out <https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa/>

College Terms

Learning new terms can be difficult at any age, but here are a few quick terms to help you understand.

1. **Credits:** Whether a school calls it a “credit” or a “credit hour,” or “semester hour”, this is just a word the college uses to measure the amount of education. A credit equals one hour you are in a classroom per week over a 15-week period. (Example: Freshman English is 3 credits. You are in a class for three hours each week.
2. **Semester:** A semester is a length of time a class runs. They are usually 15 weeks long. Most schools have a spring and fall semester schedule. Interim semesters are usually shorter than traditional semesters and are winter and summer timeframes along with a limited selection of classes to choose from. Other colleges offer rolling semesters, meaning they run courses with start dates that occur monthly or bi-monthly. **On military installations, most colleges hold shorter terms (8 weeks long).**
3. **Undergraduate/graduate:** These words refer to the number of years in the degree program the student is taking. Undergraduate courses are part of a four-year program, (certificate, associate, bachelor’s degree). Graduate courses are programs at the next level (after a bachelor’s degree has been earned) that include master’s and doctorate degrees.
4. **General Education Courses/Requirements:** These courses are the basic, non-major related courses that are required to complete a degree plan. They are usually completed first before moving on to the courses that will fulfill a major.
5. **Major Requirement:** These are the required courses that are specific to the course of study in which you will receive your degree.
6. **Prerequisite:** These are classes that are required before taking another class at a higher level.
7. **Numbering system:** Subject and number system used by colleges for identifying their classes. For example: ENG 101. ENG refers to the English Department and the first number indicates the year. (100 for first year, 200 is second year, 300 is third year and 400 is fourth year. Anything above these numbers indicate graduate level courses.)
8. **Syllabus:** This is a summary created by the instructor of what you can expect from each class (what you will learn), the projects that must be completed, exam schedule, grading, etc. It usually provides information on how to contact the instructor, email, office hours, phone number.

Most Common Degrees

ASSOCIATE DEGREE: a two-year course of study (generally 60-65 semester hours of credit). This means you must take about 20 classes, resulting in an Associate of Arts (A.A.), an Associate of Science, (A.S.), or an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.). An A.A.S. is considered a terminal or career-oriented degree, (you plan to go to school and then seek employment) and is not meant to transfer to a 4-year college or university. If you decide you want to complete your bachelor's degree, you will simply need to complete additional general education courses at the 4-year school.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE: a four-year course of study that results in either a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or a Bachelor of Science (B.S.). It is also called a baccalaureate degree. It generally consists of 120-136 semester hours of credit or a quarter-hour equivalent. This means you must take about 40 classes. You may have a major and a minor (12-18 additional and different courses from your major requirements) The minor is not required, but offered.

MASTER'S DEGREE: a one to two-year course of study usually 30-60 semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree. It usually results in a Master of Arts (M.A.) or a Master of Science, (M.S.). There are many variations as well, such as the Master of Business Administration, (M.B.A.) and the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.), or Master of Social Work (MSW). Your master's degree may or may not require a thesis.

DOCTORATE DEGREE: This is the highest academic award a student can earn for graduate study. It usually results in a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) in a particular academic field. For example, you could earn a Ph.D. in math, history, engineering or public administration. Those who earn a doctorate in education are awarded an Ed.D. (Doctor in Education) All doctorate degrees require three or more years of graduate work (60-100 semester hours) beyond a master's degree and completion of a dissertation approved by faculty committee. (Tuition assistance does not assist in paying for this degree.)

PROFESSIONAL DEGREE: This degree is specific to a certain profession, such as medicine, law, pharmacy, optometry, theology, and veterinary medicine, to name a few. It requires (1) completion of academic requirements to begin practice in a profession, (2) at least two years of college work prior to entering the program, and (3) a total of at least six academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including prior college work plus the length of the professional program itself. (Tuition assistance does not assist in paying for this 1st professional degree).

Associate Degrees

WHAT IS AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE?

It is a program of courses which usually takes two years to complete (or longer if attending part-time). It consists of 60-65 semester credits or 90-96 quarter credits, depending on what type of term the college uses. This is about **20 courses**. Most associate degrees are earned at a community or junior college. There are more than 1,260 community colleges in the United States.

WHAT TYPES OF DEGREES DO COMMUNITY COLLEGES OFFER?

1. **Technical degree programs** train students to go into jobs such as dental/medical technicians, computer technicians, automotive mechanics and many others. Many technical occupations only require a certificate or two years of college. Completion of a two-year technical degree program results in an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.). This degree is a terminal, occupational degree that is generally **not** designed to transfer into a four-year university.

2. **Transfer degree programs** consist of the freshman/sophomore years of college. These programs prepare students to transfer to a four-year university to complete their last two years. Many community colleges and four-year colleges have “articulation” agreements that identify what credit from the two-year school will transfer to the four-year college. Completion of these programs results in earning an Associate in Science (A.S.) or an Associate in Arts (A.A.)

WHAT ADVANTAGE IS THERE TO ENROLLING IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

1. **It is less expensive.** The cost of tuition at a two-year public community college is less than tuition at a public or private four-year university. Because community colleges are state-supported, legal residents of the state and in many cases, military personnel stationed in that state pay less than non-residents.

2. **It is easier to be admitted.** Over 90% of all applications at a community college are accepted. Many of these colleges have an “open-door” policy, which allows any person with a high school diploma or GED to enroll. No admissions tests like the SAT or ACT are required.

3. **Many occupations just require a two-year college education.** Community colleges offer a wide variety of degree programs in many different occupational fields of interest.

WHAT ARE SOME ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS OFFERED?

Accounting	Cosmetology	Interior Design
Art	Criminal Justice	Medical Assistant
Auto Mechanic/Technician	Data Processing	Nursing
Aviation Technology	Dental Hygiene	Legal Assistant
Business Administration	Engineering Technology	Real Estate
Computer Maint. Technology	Fire Science	Secretarial Science
Computer Science	General/Liberal Arts	Travel Management

BACHELOR DEGREES

A bachelor (or baccalaureate) degree is a program of courses which usually takes four years (or longer if attending part-time). It requires at least 120-128 semester hour credits or 180-192 quarter hours. This is about **40 courses**. You learn a considerable amount in a particular field of study (the major) and broad general knowledge.

Schools on a semester hour plan have terms which last 4 to 4 ½ months- a fall and spring semester and a shorter summer term. At schools with a quarter hour plan each quarter lasts 10 to 12 weeks. Some schools have accelerated terms-terms are shorter and the student has more class time per week. For example, in an accelerated term of 8 weeks, the course might meet two nights a week for 2 ½ hours at night.

Courses generally fall into three major areas:

1. **GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES**- usually 36-45 semester credits

a. Basic Skills – English and Math

English- usually two classes

Mathematics- number of courses and type of math determined by major

b. Social Science – choose from courses such as:

History, psychology, sociology, economics, political science, anthropology,
Western civilization, government, and others

c. Natural Sciences- choose from courses such as:

Biology, botany, zoology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, physics,
Oceanography, meteorology, earth sciences, and more

d. Humanities- choose from courses such as:

Fine art, music philosophy, literature, drama, religion foreign languages,
Humanities, speech and more

2. **COURSES IN YOUR MAJOR** – at least 30 semester credits

a. Foundation/Prerequisite Courses- These courses provide the introduction for the major. They are usually lower-level courses at the freshman and sophomore level.

b. Core Courses- Directly related to the major area of study. Primarily upper-level, junior and senior level courses.

3. **ELECTIVES**- courses you would like to take because they look interesting. Some are recommended, depending on your major.

ACCREDITATION

WHAT IS “PROPERLY” ACCREDITED?

Accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (DoE).

WHY IS ACCREDITATION SO IMPORTANT?

To make certain students receive quality education and transferable credit. For a public record of learning widely accepted by employers, college and associations, and so students can receive tuition assistance or Federal Financial Aid.

TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

Regional- i.e., Southern or Middle States or New England Association of Schools and Colleges

National – i.e., Distance Education & Training Council

Professional or Specialized – i.e., American Bar Association; American Nurses Association

ACCREDITATION BARRIERS

- Unknowledgeable consumers
- Many kinds of accrediting bodies exist
- Accreditation, approval, license all sound the same
- Diploma Mills “accredited” by agency they make up or one not approved by DoE
- Foreign students assume the U.S. Government regulates American universities

HOW DO I VERIFY ACCREDITATION?

Use DoE’s website: http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg4.html

If accredited body is NOT listed, it is NOT VALID.



Advice to New College Students

1. **Learn about your College.**

Read your college catalog. It is your ultimate guidebook. It contains: required courses; majors offered and the curriculums to follow; school policies and procedures; your rights and responsibilities; and course pre-requisites and descriptions (read these BEFORE your register for classes).

2. **Many colleges require placement testing for English and Math.**

The results will indicate whether you need to take a refresher course BEFORE beginning freshman-level courses. These placement tests are used so you are not placed in a class that is over your head.

3. **Talk to your academic advisor at the college. (College representative on an installation)**

Schedule an appointment with that person. Be prepared by becoming familiar with the catalog and get to know your advisor. They will provide you with the best guidance on completing your degree.

4. **Don't overextend yourself when you first begin.**

Don't take a heavy workload that you cannot handle. Give yourself time to get used to college learning. It is very different from high school. For every one hour of class time, you will need up to three hours for homework and/or study time.

5. **Improve your writing skills.**

Take an English refresher course if necessary. Learning to write term papers and themes will be a major task in college, but your reward will be a valuable lifetime asset. Exams, research papers, and term papers will be evaluated based on grammar, punctuation, clarity, organization, logic, and creativity and your ability to gather, analyze and communicate knowledge successfully.

6. **Do not plagiarize.**

This means do not write a paper with words you took from another source. Your writing must be your own. There are not computer programs available to professors which can detect plagiarism.

7. **Learn good study habits**

Study daily. Learn to take careful notes. Keep up with your reading. Review, review, review. There is no substitute for daily preparation and your teachers expect you to be prepared for class.

8. **Know how to use the library and internet to do research.**

9. Maintain a high grade point average (GPA)

Grades of “D” and “F” will not transfer to another college. If you take an “Incomplete,” make up the required work in time to receive a passing grade; otherwise it will become an “F” **and you will face recoupment of your tuition assistance.**

10. If you need to withdraw from a class while in the military, if possible, do it before classes begin or at the latest, the early first week of classes. (You will pay back any tuition money provided to you from the Army-(recoupment through your L.E.S.) If you just quit going to a class without withdrawing from the class you will receive an “F”.

11. Keep copies

Keep all assigned projects, term papers, and returned tests until you receive your final grade. (In case your instructor makes an error.)

12. Keep a copy of ALL financial transactions

13. ENGAGE is class discussions

Participate, whether you are in a traditional classroom or online.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Grade Point Average (GPA)

A = 4 POINTS

B = 3 POINTS

C = 2 POINTS

D = 1 POINT

The point values in all courses are added and averaged to create the GPA

EXAMPLE:

American History class **C** **2 points**

College Algebra class **A** **4 points**

Intro to Business class **A** **4 points**

Sociology class **B** **3 points**

GPA = **13 POINTS divided by 4 COURSES = 3.25**

A high GPA improves chances of getting a good job after college and getting into graduate school to earn your master's degree.

A low GPA (below 2.0) may result in probation from the college (may limit the number of classes you can take) or suspension and your tuition assistance will be revoked until your GPA returns to a 2.0.