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Heading Back to College as a Veteran by Patrick Young

As a veteran, preparing to head back to college can be a challenge. While it may be your best strategy for finding a strong career, figuring out how to get started isn't easy. If you want to start this next part of your journey off on the right foot, here are some helpful tips, brought to you by the [Northwest Veterans Newsletter](#).

Selecting a Degree Program

One of the biggest challenges veterans heading back to college face is choosing a new path. While your time in the service likely helped you develop a range of skills, figuring out how they translate in the civilian world isn't always easy. As a result, some veterans struggle with picking a major simply because they aren't sure if any particular option is the best one for them.

Luckily, there are some ways to figure it out. If you enjoyed your military occupation, turning to [Google Jobs for Veterans](#) might be a solid place to start. It lets you see the kind of jobs you'd qualify for based on your AFSC, MOS, NEC, or rating. If you find something intriguing, you can learn more about the position and choose a major that aligns with it.

If you prefer to go in a new direction, understanding the value of various majors may help. Certain degree programs tend to lead to more lucrative careers.

Here are some majors that commonly lead to higher-paying jobs:

- Accounting
- Business
- Computer Science
- Economics
- Engineering
- Finance
- Mathematics
- Nursing

If you really want to boost your earnings potential, enrolling in an online MBA program could be a great choice. You'll be able to sharpen your business skills in key areas, such as corporate finance, research, marketing, and strategic planning. Additionally, you'll set yourself for lucrative careers, including positions like a facilities manager, business administrator, and operations director.

Preparing for Unique Challenges

College isn't like being in the military. The environment is far less structured, and that can be difficult for veterans who are used to something more regimented. Additionally, other students may not relate to your military experience. Plus, you may be older than many of your classmates, creating a sense of separation.

If you find yourself struggling, look for helpful resources. If your college has a [Student Veterans of America](#) chapter, that could be an excellent place to start. Additionally, if you have a disability, reaching out to the disability services office is a smart move, ensuring you get all of the support you're entitled to while you're pursuing your degree.

Maintaining Work-School-Life Balance

Juggling work, school, and life can get tricky. In fact, [maintaining](#) balance between work and life is something we all struggle with. If you want to make it easier, embracing a few best practices can help. Consider your priorities and plan your schedule carefully, using calendar reminders to help you track appointments and classes, as well as when to transition between tasks. Prioritize your work based on what's genuinely critical, and eliminate low-value activities whenever possible. Set goals to keep you focused, and don't be afraid to ask for help when the need arises.

Funding Your Education as a Veteran

When it comes to paying for college, the first thing you need to do is evaluate your [GI Bill benefits](#). Often, that will serve as your financial foundation, ensuring your degree is more affordable.

After that, you'll need to [complete your FAFSA](#). The FAFSA determines if you're eligible for various kinds of financial aid, including [Pell Grants](#), work-study, and more.

Additionally, it's smart to look into [scholarships for veterans](#). Those can help you cover college expenses without using loans, increasing the odds that you'll graduate debt-free.

Although going back to school following your time in the military may seem overwhelming, don't let that discourage you. By choosing a degree, preparing for challenges, finding financial help, and maintaining work-life balance, you can get started today!