

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATES: A RESOURCE FOR COLLEGES AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

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In light of the increasingly competitive civilian job market, the Pentagon has placed new emphasis on better preparing transitioning servicemembers for employment in the civilian workforce. One of the easiest ways for servicemembers, most of whom have significant expertise in an occupational specialty, to enhance their civilian employment opportunities is to make themselves even more competitive and leverage their military experience by completing a certificate program providing

marketable skills. Military policemen transitioning to become local police is only one example of this concept.

To assist with identifying credit-bearing certificate programs in career and technical education fields, the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) has developed a Career and Technical

Education (CTE) Resource. Military education counselors, academic advisers, and servicemembers in the Active and Reserve components and National Guard can use this resource to locate career education pathways that can enhance their employability and add to the current skill deficits in emerging career fields.

The initial phase of the CTE Resource, released in summer 2016, identified 33 colleges and universities offering 119 undergraduate certificate programs representing career pathways in six Career Clusters: Business Management & Administration; Health Sciences; Information Technology; Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security; Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics; and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics.

In addition to providing marketable, entry-level skills, the certificate programs on the CTE Resource list reflect the needs of the military and lead to occupations with bright employment outlooks as determined by O*NET OnLine, a Department of Labor resource which catalogs career fields and occupations. These certificate programs, ranging from 12 to 47 credit hours, are offered via traditional classroom delivery, online delivery and hybrid platforms.

The institutions and certificate programs on the CTE Resource list have been carefully selected based on program requirements. Each participating institution has signed the DoD Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which ensures all institutions participating in the DoD Military

Tuition Assistance (TA) program are aware of DoD policies related to enrolling a servicemember into their institution.

The colleges and universities that have offered these programs have agreed to evaluate and award academic credit for military training and occupational experiences where appropriate (such as healthcare, information technology, and supply and logistics management) and to abide by the SOC Principles and Criteria, which consist of flexible practices that meet the needs of servicemembers while still assuring educational quality. Commonly, these institutions are located in proximity to military installations with tuition below the TA cap of \$250 per semester hour.

Each selected certificate program has programmatic accreditation where applicable, is eligible for federal student aid through the Department of Education under Title IV, and is approved by the appropriate State Approving Agency for Veterans Affairs education benefits, giving veterans the option to continue the program after transitioning from military service.

While the certificate programs that have been chosen can be stand-alone education credentials, each one is also stackable and could be fully incorporated in associate or bachelor's degrees offered by the institution, if the servicemember desires to further his or her education in the career field. This means the CTE program is not only a career enhancement tool, but also another door into higher education.

Servicemembers who are interested in learning more about the certificate programs on the CTE Resource list, such as the course requirements and enrollment processes, are instructed to contact the CTE college or university directly. Institutions are welcome to contact SOC to inquire about their own potential additions to this valuable program.

SOC seeks to expand participation by even more colleges in the program so another call for certificate programs will occur later this year. For more information, please visit <http://www.soc.aascu.org/career-and-technical-education>. With sources of high quality students in flux, the opportunity to support more military students through certificate programs could provide growth in student numbers and could also help local economies expand in important, emerging fields. **P**

