

# The Greatest – and Least Acknowledged – Educational System in the World

Google “America’s best institutions for learning,” and all sorts of websites leap to the screen. There’s “America’s Top College List” from *Forbes*. “America’s Best Colleges for Adult Learners” is another. “Best Universities in the United States” is a third option. And finally, “The 20 Best Conservative Colleges in America.” If asked which is the best institution for learning beyond high school, most of us might answer Harvard or Yale, Stanford or MIT, Princeton or Berkeley.

We’d be wrong.

The best, the greatest, the most far-reaching institution of learning beyond high school is the American military: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marines.

Think about it.

These organizations take enlistees, young men and women, many of them just out of high school, and train them in a hundred fields ranging from infantry to military intelligence, from mechanic to pilot, from medic to computer technician. These recruits come from every imaginable background and every race and creed. The high school football player from Alabama serves on a Navy destroyer alongside the kid from a Chicago high-rise. The daughter of Cuban refugees assigned to Fort Bragg performs her duties next to a young man from Haywood County, North Carolina, whose Scots-Irish ancestors settled in those mountains two hundred years ago.

The array of worldwide challenges faced by our military has given rise to more specialized training. The Army, for example, needs [cryptologic linguists](#), those “primarily

responsible for identifying foreign communications using signals equipment.” After completing a battery of tests and the 10 weeks of Basic Combat Training required of all enlistees, those gaining entry undergo anywhere from three to 52 more weeks of training. Students who are not fluent in a foreign language must also attend the Defense Language Institute for six to 18 months.

Consider our Navy Nimitz Class aircraft carriers, the largest warships ever built. Driven by nuclear engines and laden with computers and complicated operating systems, these carriers require up to 6,000 specialized personnel for their operation. In essence, they are floating towns designed to strike our enemies and protect the United States. These citadels of liberty require cooks and pilots, barbers and computer techs, and men and women trained in weaponry and nuclear power.

Like all good educational institutions, the services also provide opportunities outside the purview of their own training schools. Scholarships and bonuses are available for those who wish to attend civilian colleges or take additional courses. Many officers complete their master’s degree in civilian universities in fields ranging from history to mathematics. Those who choose not to reenlist receive funds to further their education should they choose to do so.

Not only does the military offer young people job training and educational opportunities otherwise unavailable to many of them, it also teaches life-skills. From their first day in boot camp, they learn the importance of working with others as a team. They learn such valuable lessons as discipline, order, personal responsibility, and perseverance.

In [\*Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe the World\*](#), Retired Navy Admiral SEAL William McCraven relates the lessons he learned from a life in the military. He based his book on the 2014 commencement address he delivered at the University of Texas at Austin.

In Lesson Number Three of this address – “If you want to change the world, measure a person by the size of their heart, not by the size of their flippers” – McCraven said “SEAL training was the great equalizer. Nothing mattered but your will to succeed. Not your color, not your ethnic background, not your education and not your social status.” Given the cultural turmoil on so many of our nation’s campuses, here is an educational message unique to our service personnel.

However long they remain in the military, the men and women of our Armed Forces do more than defend our country. They bring their skill sets into the civilian world and give back to our society through their performance of jobs well done.

Two thumbs up for the greatest educational system in the world.

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