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Best for Vets: Colleges 2013

Our annual rankings of the colleges doing the most for military veterans

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Former Marine Cpl. Joshua Burch is majoring in sports management at Eastern Kentucky University. (Courtesy of Eastern Kentucky University)

By [George Altman](#)
Staff writer

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Only about 50 schools nationwide belong to the Education Department's Veterans Upward Bound program.

Eastern Kentucky University is not among them.

So the school created its own version of the program, accepting veteran applicants regardless of their scores on college admissions tests, determining their academic skill levels and offering special help to those who need it — in veterans-only classes.

"What we're trying to do ... is not just talk about bringing veterans here," said Brett Morris, the school's director of admissions. "It's what do we do with them when we get them here."

Such initiative, along with what the school's president calls a "laserlike" focus on



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Former Petty Officer 2nd Class Yahaira Pou, former Senior Airman Sheena Bright, Army Reserve Spc. Mark Hatch and former Army Spc. Cesar Marin study in Collins Park at the University of South Florida. (Courtesy of University of South Florida)

veterans, propelled Eastern Kentucky to the top of our annual ranking of four-year universities. Mountwest Community & Technical College, based in West Virginia, topped the list of two-year schools, while Colorado Technical University led the way among online and nontraditional schools.

More than 650 schools, a record, responded to our 2013 Best for Vets: Colleges survey, which consisted of nearly 150 questions.

The surveys demonstrated widespread efforts by schools to accommodate vets and active-duty service members:

* About 84 percent of responding institutions said they accept American Council on

Education credits, which convert military training into academic hours.

* More than three-quarters waive late fees for students whose military education benefits arrive late, while about half waive interest, advance credit toward books and other expenses, or help students find emergency money.

* Almost 75 percent of schools offer online degree programs, which can be crucial for deployed troops.

But responding schools still showed room for improvement. Fewer than 11 percent of institutions require faculty- and staffwide training on veterans issues, and 43 percent had no such training available even for staff members who would participate voluntarily.

Half of schools have special rules in place to give service members in-state tuition. About six in 10 schools have a veterans office on campus.



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