

Graduate programs
Making higher
education work for you

Military spouses
How the new G.I.
Bill benefits you

Overcoming tragedy
New hope through
e-Learning

**MEDIA
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April 2011

ONLINE EDUCATION

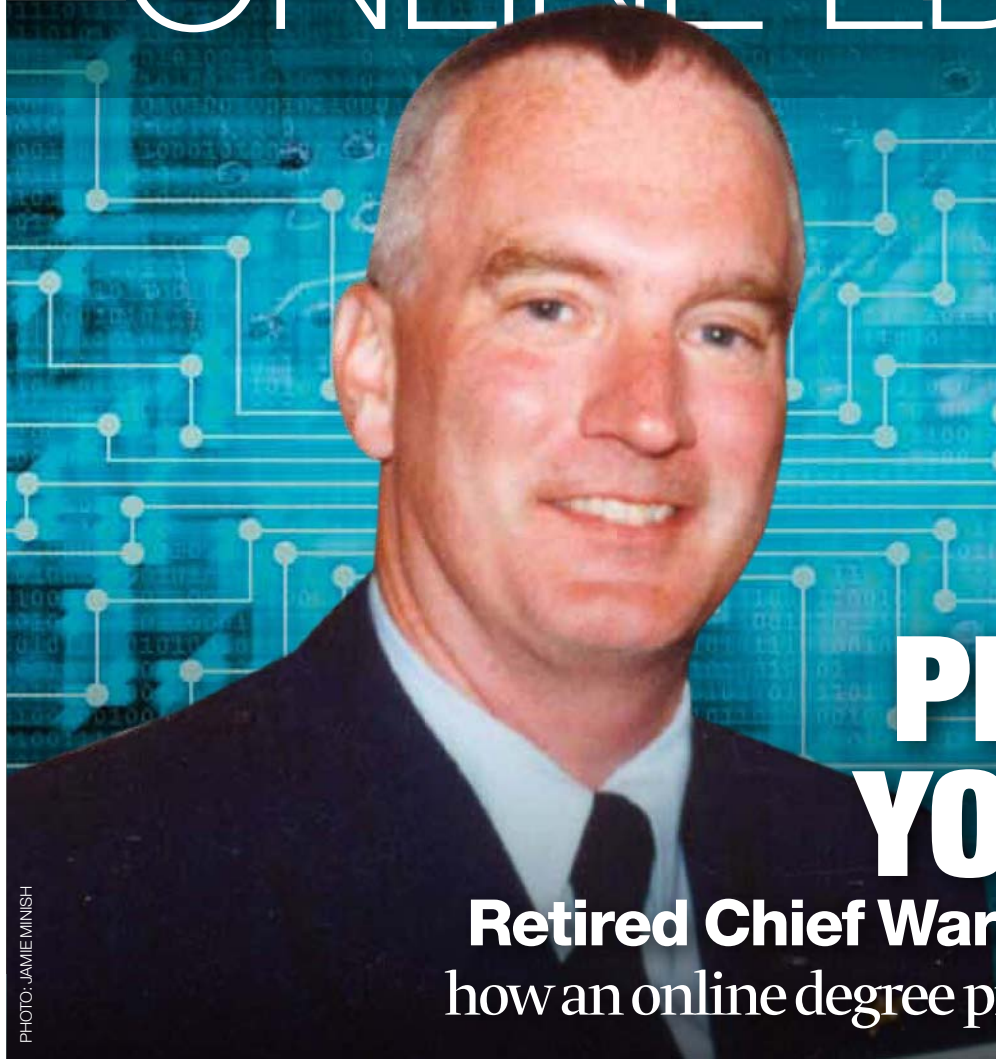


PHOTO: JAMIE MINISH



FOR GETTING THE
MOST FROM YOUR
ONLINE EDUCATION

CAREER PROGRESSION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Retired Chief Ward Officer Jamie Minish shares
how an online degree program opened the doors to his future



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CHALLENGES

Technological advancements and demand drive growth and provide **unprecedented levels of access.**



Why online education is thriving

Technological advancements in the last ten years impacted higher education significantly, none more so than the explosion of online education. Online education experienced exponential growth from 2000-2010. Interest rose in part because non-traditional students, such as working adults, started returning to school in droves during a shaky economy. These students wanted an education to advance or change their careers. The flexibility of online education provided them a way to earn a degree at their own pace while balancing work and/or family responsibilities.

In 2000, about two million prospective students visited EducationDynamics' web portals seeking information about online education. Comparatively, more than seven million prospective students visited the web portals ten years later in 2010. This demand has led

to an increase in the number and diversity of online degrees, more sophisticated and rigorous programs and a growing respect for online graduates. According to a 2010 Society for Human Resource Management study, 87 percent of human resource professionals reported online degrees are viewed more favorably now compared to five years ago. With online degrees gaining acceptance by hiring managers, interest is expected to continue to rise especially among adult students.

Finding value

This interest is not going unnoticed by colleges and universities. Institutions of all sizes and types have found value in offering completely online or hybrid classes. Those schools that have not yet started offering online degrees may fall behind soon. According to an Eduventures report on the demand for online education, about half of prospective college students prefer the online for-

“Interest rose in part because non-traditional students, such as working adults, started returning to school in droves during a shaky economy. These students wanted an education to advance or change their careers.”



Richard Stalzer
Chief Operating Officer, EducationDynamics

mat or at least a balance between online and on-campus classes.

As the last ten years have demonstrated, online education has grown in popularity because it improves access to higher education by providing students the opportunity to attend an accredited, high-quality school anytime and anywhere. The increasing use of mobile devices and mobile apps will certainly extend online education's reach, allowing more people to learn outside the classroom. And, innovative tools like social communities, cloud sourcing and eTextbooks solidify online education's position as more and more students expect online components to their post-secondary education. Online education is thriving and Americans' demand for flexibility and thirst for technology-based solutions will continue to drive it to new heights.

Richard Stalzer is Chief Operating Officer of EducationDynamics, a company that helps more than seven million prospective students find information about online programs each year.



WE RECOMMEND



Kim Dority
advises you on making a career transition

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Following tragedy, one mother finds the courage to continue her education online p. 4
How her new degree gave her confidence

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**DON'T MISS
THE WALK
RUN AMERICA
REPORT**

Distributed in June



**MEDIA
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INSPIRATION


**MILITARY SPOUSES
LEARN ONLINE**

Military spouses have always been able to adapt to life on the go. However, the difficulty in trying to earn a degree while moving frequently has resulted in many spouses putting their educational dreams on hold. But today, the popularity and availability of online education means spouses can continue their studies no matter how many times they move.

Additionally, the transferability of benefits to family members under the new G.I. Bill means there are fewer barriers to spouses seeking to obtain degrees. Military spouses sacrifice much in order to support their service member and families. The advent of online education and the continuing improvements to the process are a hard-earned and well-deserved opportunity for them.

Andi Hurley, Creator of Military.com's SpouseBUZZ.com

Following tragedy, one mother finds the courage to continue her education online

In April, Marlena Unz will be a college graduate at age 46, earning her associate's degree online from Bryant & Stratton College as a medical administrative assistant. While for many of her classmates a college education was a way to gain the skills and training required to get a job, for Unz it was also an opportunity to prove something to herself and her children.

Going back to school

Unz had not considered attending college since the early '80s. Instead, she got married to her high school sweetheart, started a family and was a stay-at-

home mother, running a small in-home daycare while her husband worked to provide for their family. However in 2009, just a few months shy of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, she abruptly became a widow following the unexpected death of her husband. Because they were so young, they had not prepared for the possibility of one of them passing away. Without him, it was now her sole responsibility to create a financially secure future for her family.

"I had no choice—I had to find a way to make a good living for my kids and I needed a college education to do



Marlena Unz

"You have to have a little faith in yourself and you'll be surprised at how much you'll accomplish and how you'll feel."

that," Unz says. "But after 27 years outside of a classroom, I decided I wanted college to come to me."

Online education was the perfect fit. It offered a way for her to continue her education without having to sacrifice time spent with her school-aged son, allowing her to be an involved parent and still earn her degree. And by being successful in school, Unz was also able to gain her confidence back.

"There was a time when I could not see a future and did not know how I could make it on my own, but doing well in school gave me back the confidence I lost when I lost my


husband. Not only have I been able to show my children that life has to go on, I was able to prove it to myself as well," she says.

Unz says education provides hope. And while she started because she needed to prepare for the future, she stayed for herself and she encourages others to give online education a try.

"You have to have a little faith in yourself and you'll be surprised at how much you'll accomplish and how you'll feel," she says.

LINDSEY MIKAL

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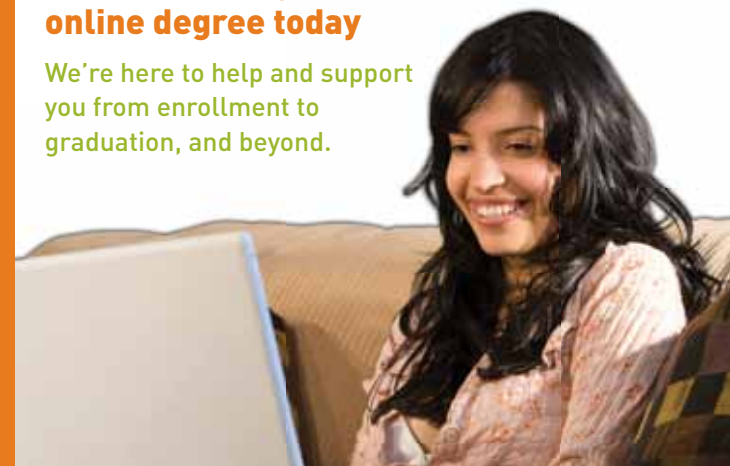
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INSPIRATION



FINDING A DIRECTION
RIGHT: Group photo of Coast Guard Cutter Escape Crew. LEFT: Jamie Minish being promoted by commanding officer.
 PHOTOS: JAMIE MINISH



TIP
2
 SET PERSONAL GOALS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Online education benefits military

The rigors of the military can make it difficult for servicemembers to attend college courses in a traditional classroom. As a result, online education programs are becoming an effective way for military personnel to earn their degrees while continuing to serve. In fact, in 2010 more than 200,000 servicemembers attended college online.

Today, online education includes the use of streaming video, chat rooms, social media, live webinars, discussion boards, and smart phone apps. These technologies make it possible for today's Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to learn anywhere at any time. Veterans too, can use their benefits to help pay for online studies at fully accredited and highly respected public and private colleges and universities across America.

The tie between education and career advancement is an important part of the military culture. Online education has become a valuable tool as a stand-alone degree or as a compliment to traditional classes. The result is a more highly educated military that will eventually bring that knowledge and experience back to our civilian workforce and communities.

TERRY HOWELL
 Managing Editor of Benefits for Military.com

Coast Guard officer Jamie Minish took advantage of online education at the right time in his career to finish his degree.

Finishing his college degree

Ret. Chief Ward Officer Jamie Minish remembered his initial college experience as "a waste of my parents' money. I was not sure what I wanted to do." Like so many other students, he did not yet have a clear direction for his life. College not suiting him, he looked around for other options, and found the Coast Guard.

"I had never considered going into the military," Minish recalled, who first went to a Coast Guard recruiter after speaking with a friend who counted a brother in its ranks. "The recruiter told me what it was all about, and I called them back." His

first decision was to spend only four years with the Coast Guard.

Away from school, with the training and experience of the Coast Guard, Minish found his direction. He decided he wanted to become an officer. Starting out as an E-1, the lowest possible rank, he had a ways to move up. He knew that the best way to advance his career was to finish his college degree.

No easy task

"I was stationed on the Outer Banks of North Carolina about five years into my career. There are lots of tourists and fisherman in the area, but it is very isolated. The nearest college was an hour drive away." He started



Jamie Minish
 Retired Chief Ward Officer

to find out about opportunities for getting a degree online, saving him the travel to a physical college.

"There is a misconception that because there is no classroom it is going to be easy. It's not. They are very demanding, they know when you log on, and when you post a response to a professor's question. Class participation is even more important online."

Anchors up

"It was a wonderful feeling," he says

about getting his degree. "I knew I could put that on my resume and be in the competition to become a commissioned officer." His degree, coupled with his experience, lifted him to the position he wanted.

After twenty years in the Coast Guard Jamie Minish retired a Chief Ward Officer, and has started another career as a project manager for a contracting company doing electrical work for highways and transit areas. "Without my education I would have certainly started as a mid-level technician; it allowed me to enter my second career at a higher level."

TONY HYMES
 editorial@mediaplanet.com



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INSIGHT

4 CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE ENROLLING IN AN ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAM

Enrollment in online learning increased 21 percent, according to the 2010 Sloan Survey of Online Learning, vastly outpacing the two percent growth in the overall higher education population.

While many factors exist, there are five critical questions every student should ask before enrolling in an online program.

Am I ready?

1 Prospective students should honestly assess their study habits and the time availability required to be successful in an online degree program. There is often a misconception that an online degree program is easy. This is not the case. Self-paced online programs require a great deal of self-motivation, discipline and organization from the student.

What are the school's qualifications?

2 First and foremost students should check to make sure the school they are considering is accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, students should look for any degree-specific requirements from professional associations for the field they are interested in to ensure future

employers will accept their degree. Information about the qualifications of the faculty, graduation rates and job placement rates within their field of study are also important.

How much student support is provided?

3 Just because online education is self-driven and self-paced doesn't mean students should be without support. "Quality programs have rich student support offerings, including a full staff dedicated to academic support and tutoring," says Eric Juhlin, CEO of Stevens-Henager College. "Size is also a factor. Just as with campus-based degree programs, online classes can be big or small; smaller classes tend to offer more support."

Are alternatives available?

4 Some students may need to experience an online class before enrolling in a full degree program. Those students should find out if it is possible to take classes in a hybrid format. Many campus-based classes are starting to have online components through online discussion boards, class wikis or even eTextbooks. Seeking out classes such as these will provide students a sneak peek at online education.

TESTDRIVECOLLEGEONLINE.COM
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When considering a career transition, online learning can help

Considering a career transition—or having one thrust upon you by a pink slip heading your way? Then now may be the perfect time to freshen up your career skills and credentials with an online course, certificate or even degree.

Perhaps you're a parent returning to the workforce after taking several years off with young ones and need to update your skills. Or you're someone who started off in one career direction, but belatedly realized you'd much rather be following a different path. Maybe you love what you're doing, but you're ready to take it to the next level professionally—and you'll need more schooling to do so. Or you've watched one too many co-workers get laid off, and you're ready to make the leap from a dying industry into one with growth potential.

Updating your skills

When you're at a career-transition point, one of the best ways to turn change into opportunity is by updating your professional skills. And one of the most popular and effective ways to do that is through



Kim Dority
Career coach and adjunct faculty member, University of Denver in Colorado



"Given today's unpredictable workplace, this may be the perfect time to get started on that career transition."

online learning.

Why has online learning become the go-to option for so many in the midst of shifting career directions? For starters, adults who are pursuing college courses or credentials are often juggling full-time jobs and family commitments along with classes and coursework. Time is criti-

cal to these students, and for many, online programs have been what made further education possible.

Now, however, there's an equally compelling benefit to online learning: the increasing focus among schools on market-driven courses and degrees. As they shift their offerings to better meet the needs of adult students, colleges and universities are now offering online courses, certificates and degrees that reflect the realities of career transition.

"We've seen a substantial shift toward career-driven educational offerings—and a corresponding surge in student interest," says Jason Steele from eLearners.com, a web resource that connects prospective students with information about online education.

More schools now offer single courses for alumni needing to update their knowledge, certificates in new skill areas or cutting-edge degrees in fields that promise to be tomorrow's job hot-spots, such as medical information, green technologies and cyber security. Given today's unpredictable workplace, this may be the perfect time to get started on that career transition.

KIM DORITY

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NEWS

In fall 2009, 5.6 million students were enrolled in at least one online course, according to the Sloan Consortium—and they were not all undergraduate students. Drawn by the convenience of an anytime, anywhere, condensed format, graduate-level courses online are growing in popularity.



Grad school goes online

During the economic downturn it became apparent that education attainment level was directly connected to job security.

The Department of Labor Statistics reported in 2010 that people with a master's degree had an unemployment rate of 3.9, compared to 5.2 for those with a bachelor's degree and 9.7 with a high school diploma. Online education serves as the perfect platform for balancing work and family with earning a graduate-degree.

The 2010, Noel-Levitz National Online Learners Priorities Report revealed a growing population earning their graduate degree online. The survey was conducted from the fall of 2007 through spring 2010 and involved 84,067 online learners from 97 institutions. Of the surveyed students, 39 percent had the goal of earning a doctorate or master's degree.

When online graduate programs began there was some question about their ability to maintain the rigor of a traditional program. But,

those fears have been put to rest. The Sloan Consortium reports that today, 66 percent of academic leaders rated the learning outcomes in online education as the same or superior to those in face-to-face settings. Students who are curious about what types of courses and programs are available and what schools currently offer online graduate programs can find additional information from web resources like GradSchools.com.

Today, technology is being used more than ever to solve challenges including achieving higher levels

of education. The flexibility and convenience of online education combined with the increased levels of professional success and financial security associated with a graduate degree mean that online graduate degree programs will continue to flourish. And, with new technological advancements and uses for existing tools being developed daily, the future of online graduate degrees is limitless.

EDUCATIONDYNAMICS
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DON'T MISS!

Grad school test prep 2.0

➔ The growing popularity of online test prep for graduate school entrance exams is undeniable. In addition to offering unprecedented convenience for busy professionals, these courses also appeal to today's tech-savvy cohort of prospective students in pursuit of competitive scores on the GMAT, GRE, LSAT and MCAT.

Selecting your program

Regardless of the content delivery mechanism—web-based versus traditional classroom-based programs—test prep experts maintain that selecting the best prep program still comes down to the effectiveness of the curriculum and the quality of the instruction.

“When considering whether to invest in an online course, test-takers should use the same criteria they would when researching classroom-based options,” says Chad Troutwine, co-founder and CEO of Malibu-based Veritas Prep.

While the preferred delivery platform is a matter of personal taste, Troutwine says that prospective test prep students should seek out a provider that offers the most comprehensive program, instructors with unrivaled expertise, access to customized feedback and documented success.

LISA WEINER

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