

Military-Focused Education and Career Advising: What Professional School

Counselors Need to Know

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Abstract

Professional school counselors are tasked with providing information about postsecondary options to high school students and their families. Opportunities in the military offer a variety of benefits; however, misconceptions about military education and career pathways are prevalent among students, families, and educators, so professional school counselors should be aware of these when advising students. The purpose of this paper is to provide professional school counselors with an overview of military service options and the benefits of each, as well as to outline the variety of options for entry into the military via active duty and higher education pathways. The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) *Professional Standards and Competencies* (2019) clearly outline postsecondary advising as a key competency for school-based counseling professionals and as such it is important for counselors to be aware of each of these military options.

Keywords: advising, military-focused careers, military-focused education, professional school counselors

Military-Focused Education and Career Advising: What Professional School Counselors Need to Know

For many high school students and their families, school counselors are a key source of information about postsecondary options. National (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015) and state (e.g., Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2018) accountability standards require school districts to document college, career, and military readiness for all annual graduates. Students who are academically prepared have a wide array of postsecondary choices available to them, and deciding between those choices may be a difficult process for students to navigate on their own (Meyer & Cranmore, 2020a, 2020b; Meyer et al., 2021). School counselors should be prepared to advise students on college and career options, as well as options that blend continuing education and career training, such as service in the armed forces (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019; Cranmore et al., 2019). The United States military offers a wide variety of postsecondary pathways for students, including higher education, technical career training, and employment (“Joining & Eligibility,” 2021). This paper will outline several postsecondary military options, describe admissions and enlistment requirements, and identify pertinent information school counselors need to accurately advise students about military-focused education and career paths.

Conceptions About Military Pathways

Students may choose to explore postsecondary military options for a variety of reasons. Some students have been introduced to military culture through family service (Schafer, 2017) or participation in Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) in high school (Days & Ang, 2004; Pema & Mehay, 2009, 2010). Other students may

perceive that careers in the armed forces align with their strengths and interests or provide a way to pay for higher education (e.g., Savell & McMahon, 2020). However, there are some lingering misconceptions about military service in popular culture that have the potential to mislead students, their families, and school personnel about what is required to serve in the armed forces.

Military Options Are Selective

Contrary to what may have been portrayed in television and film, joining the United States military is a highly selective process. Secondary schools in the United States have worked diligently to ensure that annual graduates have the option to attend college and are ready to take on the academic challenges of higher education. The most recent data from 2017 showed that 69% of students chose to enroll in college immediately after high school (“Immediate College Enrollment Rate,” 2020). However, in that same year, Pentagon data revealed that “71 percent of young Americans between 17 and 24” were “ineligible to serve in the United States military” (Spoehr & Handy, 2018, p. 1) because they were unable to meet the academic, character, medical, or physical fitness requirements for enlistment. These findings highlight the fact that enlistment in the armed forces may be more selective than the admissions standards of many colleges and universities because of the requirements beyond academic achievement. Due to the perceived advantages a college degree can provide, including higher earning potential (Huntington-Klein, 2018; Klasik & Strayhorn, 2018), college enrollment has been identified as a critical outcome of secondary education. On the other hand, the stringent standards for enlistment in the armed forces and the benefits (e.g., medical insurance, specialized career training) associated with employment in the

armed forces make choosing to serve a highly selective process that can also provide a broad range of educational and economic benefits (Spoehr & Handy, 2018).

Military Options are Specialized

Many families and students cite safety concerns as a reason they do not pursue postsecondary military pathways. This may be related to the fact that many people picture students barely out of high school serving in infantry units on the front lines of hotspots in the global war on terror (Torreon, 2018). Many individuals do serve in infantry positions and there are risks to personal safety for military personnel serving in combat zones, but there are many other career fields within the branches of the armed forces, including an extensive list of careers with civilian applications. In fact, only 12.3% of enlisted personnel and 21.6% of active duty officers serve in combat roles (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Other military occupations available to high school students interested in serving include specialized fields (e.g., healthcare, engineering, vehicle maintenance, construction, human resources) that can transfer to the civilian job market. Although there are many career options in the armed forces, eligibility for each job is determined by aptitude testing (e.g., Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery [ASVAB]) and availability, so when advising students considering military pathways, it is important to help them prepare by gathering accurate and up to date information.

Military Options Require Preparation

The decision to join the military is not one that high school students should enter into lightly. Since military education and career pathways are selective and specialized, it is important for students to be proactive and start their preparation as early in high school as possible. Individuals hoping to enter military service through enlisted or officer

pathways must pass rigorous physical performance tests, so they should begin training for these prior to the application and enlistment process. Students must also pass extensive medical examinations. Some conditions (e.g., diabetes, life-threatening food allergies) are disqualifying and there are restrictions on the use of certain medications (e.g., stimulants used to treat ADHD), so before beginning any long-term drug therapy, students and their families should discuss the desire to pursue a military career with their physician. Each branch of the military also has specific requirements regarding cognitive ability (e.g., ASVAB scores, diploma versus General Education Development [GED] certificate) and character (e.g., drug use, interaction with law enforcement). Therefore, it is critical for students to understand and prepare to meet the standards for acceptance into military education and career development pathways after high school (“Joining & Eligibility,” 2021).

Counseling Standards

The *American School Counselor Association’s (ASCA) Professional Standards and Competencies* (ASCA, 2019) identify the mindsets and behaviors effective professional school counselors should demonstrate in order to “meet the rigorous demands of the school counseling profession and the needs of pre-K-12 students” (p. 1). Several of these mindsets and behaviors specifically address the needs of older adolescents engaged in the college, career, and military choice process. For example, the third mindset states that “every student should graduate from high school ready for postsecondary opportunities” (ASCA, 2019, p. 2). This standard highlights the fact that preparation for postsecondary pathways takes time, so students need encouragement and support to start the process early in high school. In addition, the seventh mindset

encourages school counselors to “promote and enhance student academic, career, and social/emotional outcomes” (ASCA, 2019, p. 2). This standard notes the importance of helping students align their postsecondary goals with their high school preparation, including the development of non-cognitive or psychosocial skills, such as self-beliefs and motivation (Rinn, 2020). Finally, the sixth behavior related to direct and indirect student services, advises professional school counselors to “collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders for student achievement and success” (ASCA, 2019, p. 2). This standard underscores the fact that students do not make decisions about their postsecondary education and career paths alone, so it is important to provide accurate information to all parties involved in the decision-making process (Huntington-Klein, 2018).

Flexible Pathways to Military Service

An individual can serve in the armed forces in any number of capacities, including full- and part-time employment. The following sections outline college and active duty pathways into the United States military.

College Pathways

For high school students interested in serving in the United States military, there are options that blend higher education and training to prepare for service in the armed forces. Although some conceptions of postsecondary readiness separate college and career, when it comes to military college pathways, this is not an either-or proposition, and students can choose both. Some of these options cover all or part of the cost of college (e.g., ROTC scholarships, service academies) and provide other benefits (e.g., technical training, leadership courses), making military college pathways an attractive

option for interested students. In order to become a commissioned officer in the armed forces, one must hold a bachelor's degree. Although an individual can apply for military officer training (e.g., Officer Candidate School, Officer Training School, Platoon Leaders Course) after completing an undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university ("Officer Candidate School," 2021), for high school graduates who already know they want to serve in the armed forces, there are military-focused college options, including service academies, military junior colleges, senior military colleges, and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs within civilian universities.

Service Academies

Three military service academies operate under the Department of Defense (DoD), including the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado (<https://www.usafa.edu/>), the United States Military Academy (USMA) in West Point, New York (<https://www.westpoint.edu/>), and the United States Naval Academy (USNA) in Annapolis, Maryland (<https://www.usna.edu/>). There are two other service academies, including the United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) in New London, Connecticut (<https://www.uscga.edu/>), which falls under the Department of Homeland Security, and the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) in Kings Point, New York (<https://www.usmma.edu/>), which operates under the Department of Transportation.

Admission to each of these institutions is highly competitive and requires a candidate to complete an application (e.g., high school transcripts, test scores, teacher recommendations, school report), pass a medical examination and a physical fitness test, participate in an interview, and for all academies except USCGA, candidates must

also secure a nomination from an approved source (e.g., state Representative, state Senator, Vice President). The application and nomination process should begin during the candidate's junior year of high school. Although some higher education institutions have moved toward test-optional admissions policies, the United States service academies still require applicants to provide an SAT or ACT score as part of a holistic admissions process that considers the rigor of high school coursework, school and community involvement, leadership, and athletic participation. Individuals who receive an appointment to a service academy will attend for four academic years, participate in summer training, and graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree. Service academies will accept some Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and college course credits. The academies also offer course validation through successful completion of equivalency exams. However, college credits earned in high school do not shorten the number of academic semesters students are required to complete at a service academy ("FAQ," 2021). For example, if a student successfully earns 15 college credits from AP courses, they will not graduate a semester early; instead, they have the opportunity to take additional courses of interest (e.g., electives, minor course of study) while at the service academy.

Academic majors and required courses vary by the academy, but the individual academy websites provide comprehensive information about those options (see Table 1). Accepted applicants who choose to enroll in a service academy incur a service commitment of five or more years in exchange for their scholarship, which includes full tuition, room and board, books, uniforms, and monthly pay. For high school students who want to attend a service academy, it is imperative that they start the process early.

All five service academies offer summer programs, so potential applicants can get a feel for the campus and the culture before taking on the rigorous application process.

Applications for these summer programs open early in the spring of 11th grade.

Academy applications open late spring and summer before 12th grade and must be completed by January of the senior year.

Military Junior Colleges

There are four military junior colleges, including Georgia Military College in Milledgeville, Georgia (<https://www.gmc.edu/>), Marion Military Institute in Marion, Alabama (<https://marionmilitary.edu/>), New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell, New Mexico (<https://www.nmmi.edu/>), and Valley Forge Military Academy and College in Wayne, Pennsylvania (<https://www.vfmac.edu/>). Individuals can complete two years of college coursework, participate in ROTC training, and earn an associate's degree at a military junior college. Students who complete these programs can transfer to four-year universities. Admissions requirements and programs within the four military junior colleges vary, so counselors, students, and families should consult the individual school websites for more information (see Table 1). The three DoD academies (USAFA, USMA, USNA) each have preparatory schools (e.g., Air Force Academy Preparatory School [AFAPS], United States Military Academy Preparatory School [USMAPS], Naval Academy Preparatory School [NAPS]) for candidates who need additional academic preparation prior to entering the academy. Students cannot apply directly to AFAPS, USMAPS, or NAPS, but they may be offered a spot in one of the preparatory academies by the admissions department of the service academy. Candidates may also be given an opportunity to attend a military junior college for foundational academic

preparation. After one year at the preparatory or foundation school, candidates must reapply to the service academy and if accepted, complete four full years at the service academy.

Senior Military Colleges

There are six universities classified as senior military colleges (SMCs). Two of the schools, including The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina (<https://go.citadel.edu/>) and Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia (<https://www.vmi.edu/>) are military colleges where all students participate in ROTC. Four of the SMCs, including Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont (<https://www.norwich.edu/>), Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas (<https://www.tamu.edu/>), the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega, Georgia (<https://ung.edu/>), and Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia (<https://vt.edu/>) have military and civilian college programs. Admissions requirements vary by school and subsequent military service commitments depend on whether or not students received ROTC scholarship funding and other school- and program-specific factors. Interested students and their families should refer to the individual school websites (see Table 1) or speak to admissions representatives at the institutions for more information.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)

Many colleges and universities across the country host Air Force (<https://www.afrotc.com/>), Army (<https://www.goarmy.com/rotc.html>), and Navy and Marine Option (<https://www.netc.navy.mil/nstc/nrotc/>) ROTC units. After being admitted to the university, in order to join ROTC, participants must pass a physical fitness test and a medical examination, enroll in military science courses each semester, attend

physical training during the academic year and military training in the summer. ROTC programs offer scholarships, but students can participate even if they are not awarded one. However, for students interested in applying for ROTC scholarships, the process starts toward the end of the junior year. These applications require minimum SAT or ACT scores, teacher recommendations, essays, and an interview. Students who are awarded scholarships incur a service commitment after graduation and commission into the armed services as officers. However, on some campuses, students can opt for a non-contract leadership track, which allows them to enroll in military science courses and participate in group training without incurring a service commitment after graduation. Each branch has specific requirements and individual colleges and universities may vary in their expectations, so it is important for interested students and their families to refer to the ROTC websites and to the university ROTC program site for specifics (see Table 1).

Active Duty Pathways

Although enrolling in college immediately after high school is a path that many graduates choose, still others choose to go directly into the workforce for a variety of reasons. Not all military college pathways include tuition benefits, so students may choose an enlisted route to pay for college during or after their service. In a recent analysis of Pentagon data, among individuals who enlisted, 49% identified higher education benefits as a motivating factor (Savell & McMahon, 2020), which indicates that individuals choose to enlist for a variety of reasons, including education funding, career training, stable employment, and other benefits (e.g., medical and dental insurance). The ASVAB is a non-negotiable requirement for active duty, National Guard,

and Reserve enlistment (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2012), but many other aspects of active duty enlistment, such as the length and location of basic training and technical school, and the length of enlistment contracts are specific to each military branch and to the career fields within the branch. Although this paper provides some general guidelines for advising students interested in active duty, National Guard, or Reserve enlistment (see Table 2), the student, accompanied by a trusted adult (e.g., parent, guardian, mentor), should speak to a recruiter about available career fields and the training and contract requirements of those career fields.

Full-Time Active Duty

This brief overview of the qualifications for enlistment provides a quick guide; however, the list of prerequisites is quite extensive and interested students and their families should discuss specifics related to their individual situation with a recruiter. This article focuses on how to advise high school students and discussing special or extenuating circumstances is beyond the scope of this guidance. In addition, although waivers for certain requirements are an option, whether or not a waiver is granted is dependent on the type of waiver that is being requested, the branch, and the career field. The military makes every attempt to be diverse and inclusive, therefore establishing and maintaining diversity has become a priority in recruitment (Department of the Navy, 2016).

General Eligibility. Each branch of service has its own eligibility requirements which are laid out in their respective enlistment manuals, which can be accessed online (see Table 2). Eligibility for enlistment varies because each branch serves a specific purpose and mission; however, for the most part, the requirements between the

branches are similar. All persons volunteering to enlist must meet branch-specific qualifications related to age, character, cognitive ability, medical health, and physical fitness. It is imperative to note that if a person does not qualify for one branch of service, this does not mean that they are disqualified from all branches. It is highly recommended that high school students who are looking to serve in the military after graduation begin communicating with recruiters during their junior or senior year. This allows ample time to meet all the requirements necessary for military service. All persons seeking to voluntarily serve in the military must be able to carry out the oath of enlistment. The Air Force describes these standards as measures designed “to minimize entrance of persons who are likely to become disciplinary cases, security risks, or who are likely to disrupt good order, morale, and discipline” (Department of the Air Force, 2019, p.38), which is a goal shared by all branches of the armed forces. The military is not a place for rehabilitation since a service member’s duty is to effectively support the mission to which they are assigned. Therefore, only those serious about and prepared for military service should inquire.

Cognitive Ability Requirements. The most important cognitive requirement is that an applicant must be able to “read, write, and speak sufficient English to understand the oath of enlistment” (Department of the Army, 2016, p. 11). Understanding the oath of enlistment is crucial to the defense of the United States, as it aligns with an individual's ability to train for and carry out the mission attached to their chosen specialty. All enlisting personnel must show proof of high school completion. The Marine Corps, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy do not accept a GED certificate as lone proof of high school completion. An individual must also provide a

college transcript with a minimum of 15 college credit hours along with their GED certificate to be eligible for enlistment into the military. The Army and the Marine Corps manuals outline that persons who completed high school but did not pass state exit exams and did not receive a high school diploma must wait at least six months to enlist (Department of the Navy, 2011, p. 38).

All branches of service require an applicant to take the ASVAB test. An Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score is calculated from four of the eight timed subtests on the ASVAB (arithmetic reasoning, math knowledge, word knowledge, and paragraph comprehension). Each military branch specifies minimum AFQT subscale scores for enlistment eligibility and thresholds for each career field. Scores on the ASVAB/AFQT range from 1 to 99. The minimum threshold score for enlistment eligibility in the Coast Guard is 45, the Air Force is 36, the Navy is 35, and the Marine Corps and the Army are both 31 ("ASVAB test explained," 2020). It is important to note that no accommodations (e.g., extra time) are provided to students on the ASVAB test. This test provides recruiters and applicants an idea of how the applicant's aptitudes may best be applied vocationally (Department of the Navy, 2011, pp. 2-5). Applicants choose their specialties within a military branch based on their scores on the ASVAB test. Although each branch has minimum AFQT scores for enlistment, the individual career fields also have score requirements. Each branch website has information on the specific ASVAB subtest score requirements for each career field (see Table 2). The higher an applicant's score, the more options they have from which to choose. An applicant may take the ASVAB test multiple times to increase their score and scores can be used to meet enlistment criteria for up to two years after the test date.

Physical Ability Requirements. Each branch of service has varying height and weight requirements that can be found in the following orders: Marine Corps Order (MCO) 6100.3A (Department of the Navy, 2016), the Navy's Physical Readiness program (Department of the Navy, 2019b), Army Regulation 600-9 (Department of the Army, 2019a), and the Air Force manual AFI 36-2903 (Department of the Air Force, 2020). Any person willing to serve in the military must comply with the height and weight standards outlined in a height-weight table published by each service branch (Department of the Navy, 2016). For example, if Ann, a female, wants to join the Marine Corps and her height is 63 inches, her weight must fall between 107 and 146 pounds in order to ship to boot camp. However, if John, a male applicant's height is measured at 63 inches, his weight must fall between 107 and 155 pounds. All male and female service members must stay within the specified height/weight range for their branch (Department of the Navy, 2019a). If a person is not within weight standards, a body composition test will be conducted to measure body fat. Upon meeting the body fat measurements outlined for each branch, an individual may be cleared to serve. Not meeting weight requirements can negatively impact military promotions, therefore it is critical for students hoping to enlist to meet the physical requirements without taking extreme measures in order to ensure that the required height-weight ratios are sustainable throughout the individual's time in the armed forces. Each service branch has a physical fitness test (PFT) that each individual must pass prior to shipping off to boot camp. The PFT varies among the branches, but the tests typically entail a run of one mile or more, crunches, and pushups or pullups. The run and the crunches are timed events, and the pushups and pullups are counted based on correct execution

according to the guidelines stipulated within that branch of service. More information on each of the PFT tests for each branch can be found on their individual websites (see Table 2) or by talking to a recruiter.

Medical Health Requirements. All persons hoping to enlist are subjected to a thorough medical and dental examination (Department of the Army, 2019b). Prior to entry into military service, a person must be of sound mind and body. The goal of meeting these medical requirements is to ensure that service members can deploy and are combat ready. Each individual undergoes a lengthy standardized medical analysis prior to the administration of the oath of enlistment. Potential service members must be free of any contagious disease. Any person with orthodontic devices (e.g., braces) may enlist, but in the Marine Corps, for example, they would be placed in the delayed program and would not ship to Marine Corps boot camp until the orthodontic devices have been removed (Department of the Navy, 2011). Further, anyone with medical issues that require constant care cannot serve in the military, including hearing and vision loss, epilepsy, depression or anxiety treated with prescription medication, blood disorders, and type I diabetes. Any person with an antisocial behavior disorder or hospitalization in a psychiatric facility is restricted from military service. The Army and Marine Corps manual also specify that no person who is HIV positive may serve (Department of the Army, 2016). However, some individuals with some conditions can obtain a waiver (e.g., vision that is correctable to 20/20). There is an extensive list of medical disqualifiers for each branch of service and a branch representative, such as a recruiter, can provide further guidance about conditions on that list and waivers that may be available for certain conditions.

Character Requirements. Any person seeking enlistment in the military must be a United States citizen or a naturalized citizen (Department of the Navy, 2011) and provide proof, which must include a birth certificate and a social security number. Marine Corps Order 1100.1 (2011) states that “any lawful permanent resident with a valid I-551 green card or a valid foreign passport stamped ‘*processed for I-551*’(p. 15) may serve in the armed forces. All applicants must pass a background check prior to entry into the military. Background checks ensure that a person is not a “disciplinary or security risk” (Department of the Air Force, 2019). The most important consideration for high school students prior to the background check is that the student should be truthful about past behavior (e.g., recreational drug use). Any person who attempts to hide questionable activity that subsequently comes out during the background check will be automatically disqualified. Minor charges related to character may be waived; however, felony charges are not waivable and disqualify a person from military service (Department of the Navy, 2011). Further, any person who has been required to register as a sex offender is prohibited from military service. Active drug use of any sort is not tolerated in the military and if a drug or alcohol test should come back positive during the enlistment process, the individual would be disqualified for service in any branch. However, waivers may be granted for prior drug use, depending on the circumstances and associated charges. According to the Army manual, any person who refuses a drug and alcohol screening during the enlistment process will not be authorized to continue (Department of the Army, 2016, p. 12).

Tattoo policies can be found in the enlistment manual for each branch of service. For example, the tattoo policy for the Air Force states that “tattoos/brands/body

markings anywhere on the body that are obscene, commonly associated with gangs, extremist, and/or supremacist organizations, or that advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited in and out of uniform” (Department of the Air Force, 2020, p. 22). The overarching consideration when examining tattoo content and placement for service in the Air Force is that “it must not violate community standards” (Department of the Air Force, 2020, p. 22). Depending on the nature of the tattoo, an applicant can receive a waiver or they may be disqualified from military service. Other branches of service have specific policies related to body markings. For example, the Marine Corps prohibits entry to any person with tattoos on the head or neck (Department of the Navy, 2011, p. 77). Due to the fact that these policies are branch-specific, it is important for interested students and their families to speak to a recruiter about their tattoo content and placement.

Age Limits. Each military branch requires all enlisting persons to be at least 18 years of age, but parental consent may be given for an individual to enlist as early as 17. If an individual is 17 years old and married, parental consent is not required (Department of the Navy, 2018). There are also age limitations in the event that an individual should decide to enlist later in life (see Table 3). The Air Force stipulates that any individual who has emancipated from their parents and is at least 17 years of age may enlist in the service without parental consent. If an individual is married or unmarried and has legal or physical custody of a child less than 18 years of age, they are ineligible for service in the Air Force. Restrictions related to marital and child custody status vary by branch of service, so interested students and their families should consult with a recruiter about their individual situations. Becoming a military

officer requires an individual to have completed a Bachelor's degree prior to commissioning. The age requirements for officers differ from those who enlist (see Table 4).

National Guard and Reserve Enlistment

Many conceptions of postsecondary readiness divide college, career, and the military into separate competencies (e.g., Klasik & Strayhorn, 2018; Spoehr & Handy, 2018); however, National Guard and Reserve enlistments allow students to blend military service with a college education or a civilian career. Although the general public may be aware that many service members leaving active duty can choose to transfer to National Guard and Reserve units for part-time service, many people are unaware that qualified high school students can enter directly after graduation. Some individuals serve in the Air National Guard (<https://www.goang.com/>) and the Army National Guard (<https://www.nationalguard.com/>) or the Air Force (<https://afreserve.com/>), Army (<https://www.goarmy.com/reserve.html>), Coast Guard (<https://www.gocoastguard.com/reserve-careers>), Marine (<https://www.marines.com/>), or Navy (<https://www.navy.com/forward>) Reserves full-time, the majority of traditional Guard and Reserve members report to their military installations monthly for drill and annually for training. For students who want or need to stay closer to home, after their initial basic training and technical school, these individuals can return home or to a location of their choice (e.g., college campus) to pursue other goals while serving part-time. In order to serve in the National Guard or Reserves, students must meet all of the requirements for active duty service and the branch and career field ASVAB and AFQT minimums. Career fields are

subject to availability at the time of enlistment, so interested students should speak to a National Guard or Reserve recruiter about their options.

Advising Resources

As with all college and career planning, having accurate information is vital to the decision-making process. Maintaining contact with local recruiters, visiting service academies and military colleges, and staying current on information released via official government websites are important steps for professional school counselors to take when preparing to advise students with military-focused career aspirations (see Table 1 and 2). The requirements for service and the needs of the military can change, so having accurate information is the first step in advising high school students and their families.

Conclusion

The United States military provides a variety of career options for high school students. Through multiple entry points and a variety of pathways, students have access to advanced training, funding for higher education, and workforce experience that, in many cases, is applicable in civilian contexts as well. The ASCA (2019) model emphasizes that professional school counselors have several roles to play in advising students and their families through the postsecondary decision-making process, including providing accurate resources, and helping students and families interpret quantitative (e.g., test scores, grade point average, class rank) and qualitative (e.g., personal preferences, motivation) data to determine compatible paths. Early planning is the key to successful military entrance for interested students, so the earlier these individuals are exposed to the requirements and pathways for military service, the

earlier they can begin creating plans for after high school graduation that align with those goals.

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Biographical Statement

Melanie S. Meyer holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Gifted and Talented Education from the University of North Texas. She has been a teacher in gifted and advanced academic English classrooms at the middle and high school level for over 20 years and currently teaches Advanced Placement Language and Composition. Her research focuses on adolescent identity development, school-based talent development, and the college, career, and military choice process for talented students.

Dr. Cranmore is an Assistant Adjunct Professor at Grand Canyon University, where he serves as a senior Dissertation Chair and professor in the College of Doctoral Studies. His research interest has long included school counseling and college selection processes. In addition, he has served as a professional school counselor in Texas for the past 15 years. In that time, he has presented at the Texas Counseling Association on numerous occasions and won their Outstanding Research and Outstanding Professional Writing Awards. Most recently, he has been Named a 2021 College Board Outstanding School Counselor.

Trish Ramos is an Ed.D. student at the School of Education with Baylor University. She served 20 years in the United States Marine Corps. After retiring from the Marine Corps, in 2012, she became a Marine Corps JROTC Instructor. She teaches leadership, and mentoring students for life after high school. She also assists students in navigating military entry for service. Her dissertation focuses on the college readiness of high school students and their perceptions as students transition to college.

Appendix

Table 1

Advising resources for college military pathways

College military options	
Service academies	<p>U. S. Air Force Academy (https://www.usafa.edu/)</p> <p>U. S. Coast Guard Academy (https://www.uscga.edu/)</p> <p>U. S. Merchant Marine Academy (https://usmma.edu/)</p> <p>U. S. Military Academy (https://usma.edu/)</p> <p>U. S. Naval Academy (https://usna.edu/)</p>
Military junior colleges	<p>Georgia Military College (https://www.gmc.edu/)</p> <p>Marion Military Institute (https://marionmilitary.edu/)</p> <p>New Mexico Military Institute (https://www.nmmi.edu/)</p> <p>Valley Forge Military College (https://www.vfmac.edu/)</p>
Senior military colleges	<p>Norwich University (https://www.norwich.edu/)</p> <p>Texas A&M University (https://www.tamu.edu/)</p> <p>The Citadel (https://go.citadel.edu/)</p> <p>University of North Georgia (https://ung.edu/)</p> <p>Virginia Military Institute (https://www.vmi.edu/)</p> <p>Virginia Tech (https://vt.edu/)</p>
ROTC programs	<p>Air Force ROTC (https://www.afrotc.com/)</p> <p>Army ROTC (https://www.goarmy.com/rotc.html)</p> <p>Navy ROTC (https://www.netc.navy.mil/nstc/nrotc/)</p>

Note. This information is updated regularly, so it is important for professional school counselors to check the sites before providing these links to students and families. The Air Force Academy commissions students into the Air Force and Space Force. The Naval Academy commissions students into the Navy and Marine Corps. Navy ROTC offers a Marine option.

Table 2*Advising resources for active duty military pathways*

General information	<p>Today's Military (https://www.todaysmilitary.com/)</p> <p>Federal Student Aid (https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/military)</p> <p>Financial Aid (https://finaid.org/military/)</p> <p>Military Programs & Benefits (https://www.usa.gov/military-assistance)</p>
Active duty military options	
Full-time enlistment	<p>U. S. Air Force (https://www.airforce.com/how-to-join)</p> <p>U. S. Army (https://www.goarmy.com/learn.html)</p> <p>U. S. Coast Guard (https://www.uscg.mil/Join/)</p> <p>U. S. Marine Corps (https://www.marines.com/)</p> <p>U. S. Navy (https://www.navy.com/joining-the-navy)</p> <p>U. S. Space Force (https://www.spaceforce.mil/)</p>
National Guard	<p>Air National Guard (https://www.goang.com/)</p> <p>Army National Guard (https://www.nationalguard.com/)</p>
Reserves	<p>Air Force Reserves (https://afreserve.com/)</p> <p>Army Reserves (https://www.goarmy.com/reserve.html)</p> <p>Coast Guard Reserves (https://www.gocoastguard.com/reserve-careers)</p> <p>Marine Corps Reserves (https://www.marines.com/about-the-marine-corps/marine-corps-structure/marine-corps-reserve.html)</p> <p>Navy Reserves (https://www.navy.com/forward)</p>

Note. This information is updated regularly, so it is important for professional school counselors to check the sites before providing these links to students and families.

Table 3*Military enlisted age limits*

Branch of Service	Age Minimum	Age Maximum
U.S. Army	17 ¹	34
U.S. Marines	17 ¹	29
U.S. Navy	17 ¹	39
U.S. Air Force	17 ¹	39

Note. ¹ denotes that parental consent is required. Otherwise, the individual must wait until they turn 18.

Table 4*Military officer age limits*

Branch of Service	Age Minimum	Age Maximum
U.S. Army	19	32
U. S. Marines	20	30
U. S. Navy	19	42
U. S. Air Force	18	39