

WEST POINT REACHES OUT TO ACTIVE DUTY SOLDIERS

The military academy offers Soldiers the opportunity to advance in their careers, becoming officers in the U.S. Army



By Angela Simental

The United States Military Academy at West Point has been a premier center for future military and community leaders since its inception in 1802. As active duty Soldiers face more challenges in the battlefield and the classroom, career advancement opportunities to become officers open in the top public college in the nation, explained West Point Command Sgt. Major, Anthony Mahoney to Class 60 at the U.S. Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas in February.

“It’s not very well known that active-duty Soldiers can attend West Point,” Mahoney said. “It is not publicized enough, so we need to put more information out there.”

Mahoney explained that noncommissioned officers can help their Soldiers become aware of the opportunities and admission process at West Point through professional-growth counseling. “We always talk to Soldiers about re-enlistment options, but we should also talk to them about the options to advance in the Army,” he said.

Mahoney urges NCOs to look for talent and learn how they can send their best enlisted Soldiers to West Point. He said prior-enlisted Soldiers bring a wealth of knowledge to the cadets who have never been in the Army or deployed.

“As NCOs, you have the ability to facilitate the process and link your Soldiers to West Point,” added Maj. Brian Easley, West Point Soldier admission officer. “We need the chain of command to endorse it.”

In 2009, *Forbes* magazine and The Center for College Affordability and Productivity ranked West Point as the number one public college in the United States based on the level of education, experience and achievements.

Its core curriculum is divided into four areas: academics, physical fitness, military poise and moral and spiritual development, to create, as Mahoney described, a “well-rounded leader.” Its academic program offers 45 majors. “It is challenging and stressful, but students receive world-class education,” Mahoney said. “Our prior-enlisted Soldiers are more experienced and tend to rise to the top of the cadet leadership.”

West Point is also known for being competitive in the sports arena, which is why cadets are expected to get involved in a sport each semester. On the other hand, military training is held every summer, while moral development is continuous throughout the four years. These activities are easier for a prior-enlisted Soldier because they already have the discipline and skills from having served in the Army, Mahoney explained.

Upon graduation, cadets receive a bachelor’s degree and are automatically commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. They must serve a minimum of five years on active duty and agree to an eight-year military service obligation.

“In West Point, cadets are totally immersed 24 hours a day, 365 days,” Mahoney said of the four years students spend at West Point.

To prepare Soldiers for the academic, mental and physical challenges they will face at West Point, young privates or specialists are sent for one year to the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, which according to the West Point admission office, offers an individually-tailored program “to correct any deficiencies in academic areas and strengthen the candidate’s abilities for a smoother transition to West Point.”

Easley said Soldiers do not need to take any college classes to attend the academy. Prior-enlisted Soldiers need to demon-

strate potential to succeed in the challenging environment, he said. The admissions process can be completed online, anywhere, anytime.

Every year, there are 85 slots reserved especially for active duty Soldiers. “Ten percent of the class should come from the Army,” Easley said. “It is good for those young cadets right out of high school to have someone in their class to look up to – who has experience.”

Any current-contract Soldiers may have will be terminated once they start attending West Point. “They don’t need to worry about their contract or paying back any loans,” Easley said. In case Soldiers are forced or decide to leave, they will “pull out the old contract,” he added. “They are committing themselves to the Army – they will serve active duty after graduation.”

“Remember to look at the bigger picture,” Mahoney said to Class 60. “Giving up the best Soldiers in your unit doesn’t mean losing them. It means the Army is gaining a better officer.”

For more information visit West Point’s Web site, <http://admissions.usma.edu/Soldiers/>, or call the admissions office at 800-822-USMA. 

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Evaluation Process

- Academic performance counts for 60 percent and is based on high school rank, SAT or ACT score or transcripts
- Leadership counts for 30 percent and is based on extracurricular activities, athletic participation and faculty reviews
- Fitness assessment counts for 10 percent and is based on basketball throws, pull-ups, 40-yard shuttle run, modified sit-ups, push-ups and one-mile run



Photos courtesy of West Point



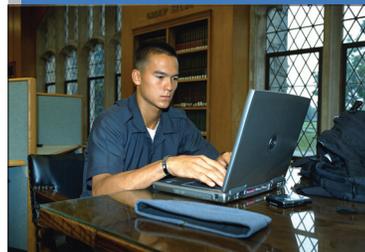
Admission qualifications

- Must be at least 17 years old but not yet 23 by July 1 if admitted to USMA, and not older than 22 if admitted to USMAPS
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Receive an SAT score between 1050 or 1450 or an ACT score above 21
- Unmarried, not pregnant or with legal obligation to support a child
- Have completed Basic Training
- Receive a service-connected nomination from a commander
- Be of good character, show trustworthines and emotional stability (never been convicted of a felony)
- Demonstrate physical strength in accordance to the parameters established by the Candidate Fitness Assessment
- Pass the medical exam administered by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board



How to apply

- Complete a candidate questionnaire online at <http://secwww.admissions.usma.edu/forms/apply/Default.asp>
- Apply online at <http://admissions.usma.edu/apply.cfm>



Advantages of attending West Point

- Automatic consideration for the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School
- Graduates are commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army
- Full medical benefits
- Fully funded four-year college education (includes tuition, room and board)
- Cadets receive an annual stipend of \$6,500

