

# GREEN TO GOLD

## Program offers path for enlisted Soldiers to become officers

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**E**nlisted Soldiers interested in becoming officers may want to look into what the Army's Green to Gold program has to offer. The program puts those in the enlisted ranks on a path to become commissioned officers by taking them off active duty and sending them to school as full-time students.

Green to Gold is a unique program that allows enlisted Soldiers to complete a degree and earn a commission. "You can also do Green to Gold while pursuing a

master's degree," said Capt. Scott Smith, the Green to Gold advisor for the U.S. Army Cadet Command at Fort Drum, N.Y.

Soldiers seeking to trade their current military obligation for a degree and the responsibility of being an Army officer can choose from three Green to Gold options: the scholarship option, the nonscholarship option, and the nonscholarship, active-duty option.

With the most-competitive option, the Green to Gold scholarship, the Army pays for tuition, books and other expenses.

The most-commonly used Green to Gold program is the two-year, nonschol-

arship option. It is widely used because Soldiers who have completed at least two years of college can enter the program without having to compete for a slot. It can also be more financially beneficial, Smith said.

"Believe it or not, with the post-9/11 GI Bill combined with other programs, it is the option that gives the cadet the most financial gain," Smith said.

The last is the nonscholarship, active-duty option. Soldiers remain on active duty and make permanent change-of-station moves to a university as full-time Army ROTC cadets.

### GREEN TO GOLD AT A GLANCE

**SCHOLARSHIP OPTION:** Scholarships are awarded for two, three or four years depending on the amount of time Soldiers need to complete their degrees. Those who win scholarships receive

- Tuition or room and board support.
- Additional money for textbooks, supplies and equipment.
- A monthly stipend for up to 10 months each school year.
- Pay for attending the Leader Development and Assessment Course between the junior and senior years of college.
- If qualified, GI Bill and Army College Fund benefits.

**NONSCHOLARSHIP OPTION:** This is available to Soldiers who have completed two years of college, and who can complete their degree requirements in two years. Individuals receive

- A monthly stipend for up to 10 months each school year.
- Pay for attending the Leader Development and Assessment

Course between the junior and senior years of college.

- If qualified, GI Bill and Army College Fund benefits.
- Nonscholarship participants can also participate in the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP). As SMPs, Soldiers are members of either a drilling Reserve or Guard unit and ROTC.

**NONSCHOLARSHIP, ACTIVE-DUTY OPTION:** This two-year program provides eligible active-duty enlisted Soldiers the opportunity to complete a baccalaureate degree or obtain a two-year master's degree and be commissioned as an Army officer upon receiving the appropriate degree. Soldiers selected will

- Continue to receive their current pay and allowances while in the program (up to a maximum of 24 consecutive months).
- If qualified, GI Bill and Army College Fund benefits.
- Normal permanent change-of-station entitlements.

Soldiers who choose this option receive current pay and allowances while they go to college, Smith said. Those eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill or Army College Fund can use those entitlements to offset the cost of tuition. To qualify for this option, Soldiers must be within 21 months of completing their bachelor's or master's degrees.

There is also another opportunity for a scholarship — the Division Commander's Hip Pocket Scholarship. The option still falls under the two- to four-year Green to Gold scholarship program, but the discretion to grant the scholarship is up to the applicant's commanding general. Soldiers apply and submit their Green to Gold Hip Pocket Scholarship packets through their divisions' personnel offices, and the division commander subsequently reviews the packet.

"Last year, V Corps received five (Hip Pocket Scholarship) packets, and all five were approved," said James Miller, a personnel officer with the U.S. Army Europe human resources division. V Corps is one of four USAREUR units authorized to grant Hip Pocket Scholarships. The 21st Theater Support Command, 1st Armored Division and Joint Multinational Training Command are other USAREUR units that have been participating in the Green to Gold Hip Pocket program.

Jonathan Sheehan, a Green to Gold ROTC cadet and former infantryman with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, encouraged Soldiers to apply, just as he did almost four years ago.

"Apply if you have the opportunity. It is one of the most invaluable experiences that I have had the good fortune to



Photo by Mark E. Lewis

Jonathan Sheehan was an infantryman with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, before beginning studies toward a history degree at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. He graduated and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in May.

be a part of," said Sheehan, who graduated in May with a history degree from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. He attended TCU with a four-year Green to Gold ROTC scholarship.

"After talking with my platoon leader and company commander, we decided I should get my degree and earn a commission," Sheehan said.

Sheehan's active-duty and deployment experience gave him an advantage over other cadets during his freshman and sophomore years of school, he said.

"An enlisted background is an extremely valuable thing," Sheehan said. "I guarantee, as prior enlisted, you will be shown a great amount of respect when you walk in, something that your peers will not have. Also, a lot of the stuff we learned in ROTC the first two years is second nature to you. ... By your third and fourth year, it gets challenging. But, you still have a great leg up."

As an ROTC cadet, Sheehan's daily schedule included physical training, classes and homework. Other than that, he said, "the time is pretty much yours."

"You're just another student but with the benefit of having school paid for up front," he said. "I have to admit, it's a pretty cushy life."

Getting in the Green to Gold program can be challenging, but Sheehan said the benefits outweigh the sometimes frustrating process.

"Keep working at it," he said. "Even if you don't get accepted the first time, keep trying. It may be a pain to get in, but once you are, it is very much worth it."

Sheehan was commissioned as a second lieutenant in May and expected to be stationed at Fort Sill, Okla.

For information on Green to Gold eligibility and service requirements see your local personnel office or visit [www.goarmy.com/rotc/enlisted-soldiers.html](http://www.goarmy.com/rotc/enlisted-soldiers.html).