

OPERATION MBA

BUILDING ON YOUR MILITARY EXPERIENCE FOR CAREER SUCCESS



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Considering an MBA Why should I get a graduate management degree?	1
The MBA Advantage What are the benefits of a graduate management degree?	2
Meet Ryan Leary	3
Positioned for Success How are military personnel ahead of the game?	4
Meet Kerri Yarbrough	5
MBA FAQs	6
MBA Programs What types of graduate management programs are available?	7
Stepping Into Your Future: A Timeline How should I consider planning for my graduate management studies?	8
GMAT® Facts What is the GMAT® exam, anyway?	10
From Combat to Classroom How can I best transition from the military into an academic setting?	11
Moving Forward How do I get started?	12
Notes	13

The MBA Planner was designed specifically for military personnel by the Graduate Management Admission Council® (GMAC®), the people behind the GMAT® exam. For more than half a century, we've been helping people just like you find their way to the MBA.



"[My MBA] will help me progress further in my career, and let me use the tools that I learned during my time in business school to become a better manager and a more effective leader."

John Soto

Captain, U.S. Army National Guard East Carolina University

If You Are Considering an MBA, You're Not Alone.

Each year thousands of experienced military personnel consider earning a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) degree. Active duty, National Guard, and reserve personnel should include this crucial educational step as part of their career plans.

The MBA is a prerequisite for most of today's management positions, and transitioning soldiers are discovering it takes even more than a four-year degree and military service to impress corporate recruiters.

For those remaining in the armed forces, a graduate management degree can help accelerate advancement and improve assignment selection in a military job market that can be just as competitive as the civilian business world.

Whether you're transitioning or moving up the ranks, a graduate management degree will place you a cut above other candidates and increase your odds for better earnings and career advancement in the future.



COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

"Military officers—both active and reserve—are increasingly well educated. In our merit-based promotion system, competition is tough. An advanced degree—especially an MBA—creates a competitive advantage. More importantly, it enhances the contribution one can make to national defense."

Dennis M. McCarthy

Lt. General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired) Executive Director Reserve Officers Association

Military + MBA = Career Advantage

The management and leadership skills you have developed through military service will prove strong assets in business or as you continue your military career. By strengthening your professional portfolio with a graduate management degree, you become particularly desirable to those making hiring and assignment decisions.

Why? The MBA in itself does not guarantee success, but choosing a quality program can put you on the path toward success. You want to get a lot out of your MBA program, and your school will have some expectations of you as well. Remember, your classmates will help shape your education. In order to get the most out of your MBA, choose a school that selects its students by requesting a multi-dimensional application that includes a GMAT® exam score.

Even after you've completed your studies, the MBA can only be an asset if applied effectively. Military service provides a unique benchmark of leadership, strategic thinking, and performance that cannot be taught in a classroom. When combined, military and MBA credentials also increase your potential for higher earnings.

"I did not want to go somewhere just to add the MBA on my resume.

I decided to pursue an MBA because I believe that it can be applied to a variety of job situations."

Rob EtheridgeSergeant, U.S. Army
Clemson University



Meet Ryan Leary

Current Position: MBA student, University of California, San Diego **Education:** BS in Business and Marketing, Pennsylvania State University

Rank: Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

Ryan was deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He spent nine months in the Persian Gulf, where he was a Boarding Officer managing a team of 12. Ryan worked as an Admiral's Aide, and he plans to continue his career with the military.

How was your transition from the military into the school environment?

For me what mattered most was finding a school that had a vision of the type of business leaders it wanted to create that matched my vision of the type of business leader I wanted to be. My school challenges norms and is committed to the use of technology in the management process. This was a perfect fit for the direction today's military is taking.

The transition from the military to an academic setting was easy since the military calls for you to be available or working 24 hours a day. The school schedule allows you time to finish everything and to divide your time systematically.

Our school is focused on collaboration. One challenge is that the military setting has a clear chain of command; the requirement to follow is understood. In school, everyone is on the same level. It requires a different type of leadership and a different type of "followership." Having been in the military, I did not find it hard to make that transition and to know when to lead and when to follow. In the military,

you know that part of your role is to contribute to the greater scheme of things. Similarly, in the classroom, you contribute to the success of the team.

I've learned how to examine things to find the best outcome, and how to get people to buy in to my projects and ideas.

How will you transition from the school environment back into the military?

I am in a unique position—the Navy is paying for me to earn my MBA. When I finish, I will return to the Navy. Although this means less time at home, I am really excited to go back into the military and apply what I have learned.

Even though people in school are talking with a for-profit mentality, and I am returning to the military, a lot of valuable information can be gleaned from this experience. I look for how to apply this business-world knowledge to my military experience. Connecting with my peers has been easy. I provide insights based on my military background and I listen for how their insights can be translated to the military.

Businesses look at the military for leadership and organizational structure. And the military looks at businesses for best practices and financing models. There is a connection between the two worlds if people focus on how to get the best of both.



There has never been a better time to enhance your military background with an MBA. According to industry surveys, many companies do not have succession plans in place to handle expected personnel shortages. MBAs with military experience will be in a favorable position to capitalize on this demand.

What are the characteristics of a successful MBA? Talk to a number of MBAs and you will likely find a wide range of experience and undergraduate work. MBAs with military backgrounds are equally diverse, but they have a number of things in common that make them more desirable to business schools and employers, and increase their odds for success.

Skills: Business schools and corporate recruiters will recognize your value to their programs in terms of your finely honed skills in the following areas:

- Leadership
- Time and project management
- Handling real-world situations

"The military has a team-based environment. From squad to platoon to company to battalion, you have been in a team-based environment from the beginning. You've learned how to survive and get the task done."

Melvin T. Stith

Captain, U.S. Army (Retired)
Dean, the Martin J. Whitman School
of Management at Syracuse University

Leadership Experience: According to experts, the key to success is getting relevant job experience before beginning your graduate management studies. Military people have experience developing teams and working with large groups of people to accomplish organizational goals. Military personnel are known for:

- Values and ethics
- Strong leadership skills
- Problem-solving and decision-making skills

Level of Responsibility: The ability to handle responsibility is vital to every facet of military life. This includes the responsibility for the priceless lives of others. Early in their careers, soldiers also assume responsibility for:

- Substantial budgets
- Costly equipment
- Mission-critical performance of their units

Employment Profile: The career outlook for MBAs with military backgrounds is bright, whether they remain on active duty or transition out of the military. Even during an economic downturn, business school graduates from the military report more favorable experiences than their civilian counterparts. Military graduates are heavily recruited by business and government sectors alike. Job-seekers from this group report:

- Higher placement rates
- Higher compensation packages

"Business acumen with military experience is definitely a plus in the commercial sector. It's the perfect marriage of discipline and leadership with commerce and entrepreneurialism. This blend and mind-set give a person the tools necessary to have a successful career in business, and, in particular, the Government contracting arena."

Bryan Stanford

Vice President, Human Resources, The Wexford Group International (Management and technical consulting firm)



Meet Kerri Yarbrough

Current Position: MBA Student, University of Wisconsin-Madison **Education:** BS in Oceanography, United States Naval Academy

Rank: Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

Kerri graduated from the Naval Academy in 1997. During her nine years in the Navy, she served in a variety of leadership positions, ranging from the Supply Department Head on a Guided Missile Destroyer to Material Division Officer on an Amphibious Assault Ship. During her most recent assignment, her ship was diverted to Southeast Asia and played a critical role in supporting the 2004-2005 Tsunami Relief Efforts. Kerri is attending business school through the Navy Supply Corps. Upon graduation, she will continue her career as an active duty supply officer.

How was your transition back into the school environment?

Transitioning into the school environment was fairly seamless. Prior to school, I was deployed to the Western Pacific in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and was accustomed to working long hours and feeling pressured to accomplish everything. Surprisingly, school (especially first semester) was not much different. Just as in the military, I was challenged with trying to balance various requirements (i.e., school work, team projects/group meetings, interviews, etc.) in a short time period. However, in contrast with the military, business school provided me with a lot more flexibility and control over my schedule. There were also a few other students at our school with previous military experience, which helped ease the transition.

My military experience allowed me the opportunity to provide a unique perspective to my professors and peers. A lot of our leadership and business practices are very transferable and I enjoyed sharing the challenges I faced as a supply officer with my classmates.

How did you leverage your military experience in the job/internship search?

Since I am still on active duty, I did not need to pursue a full-time job. The Supply Corps, however, highly encourages us to seek an internship with a top business to leverage our military experience with corporate best practices to bring back to the military. I interned at a Fortune 500 distribution company during the summer. The internship search is very similar to the full-time job search. Many companies are now placing a stronger emphasis on a person's soft skills (leadership, public speaking, presentation skills, etc.) during the interview process. A lot of the interview questions are also behavioral and interviewers want to see how you think and operate under various settings. The military provides us a wealth of experience and I leveraged it during the recruiting and interview process to show how I led my department, executed various projects, and implemented change.



Most Commonly Asked Questions:

Q: What funding options exist to help me pay for my MBA?

A: Military personnel may have access to the GI Bill, and reservists or National Guard members may be eligible for home-state funded grants. In addition, most state funded universities offer "in state" tuition to those on or just leaving active duty. Many schools offer 20–50% tuition assistance to desirable candidates based on perceived quality of the applicant, unique characteristics brought to the program, and a candidate's "fit" at the school. Some schools reserve awards for military personnel studying full time and offer low-cost deferred payment programs. Information about sources of low-cost education loans can be obtained from school admissions offices.

More Support: www.mba.com/mba/makeyourdecision

"Many vets do not take advantage of the opportunity that the military offers in terms of financing higher education. This is one of the best deals the military offers."

Brooks Abramson

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps University of Illinois at Chicago

Q: What does a school's cost say about its overall quality? What do I need to know and what plan should I follow to get into the right school?

A: Quality is important, especially among the faculty who will teach you and the students who will be your partners in learning. However, higher cost doesn't always mean higher quality. Schools are known for particular strengths and have recruiting relationships with certain types of employers. Before giving serious consideration to an MBA degree, look beyond school and plan your future career, then seek a program that advances that plan.

More Support: www.mba.com/mba/findyourprogram

Q: I have been out of college for several years and have concerns about taking the GMAT® exam. Should this prevent me from pursuing an MBA?

A: Relax—people from all over the world and from all different backgrounds have taken the test successfully, and you can, too. Many resources are available to help you understand, prepare for, and succeed on the GMAT® exam. Admissions counselors use GMAT® scores as one of several sources of information about an MBA candidate.

More Support: www.mba.com/mba/takethegmat

Your reason for pursuing an MBA and the time and resources at your disposal will help you determine the type of MBA program that is right for you.

MBA PROGRAMS

What Types of MBA Programs Are Available?

There are generally two reasons for obtaining an MBA: to acquire advanced skills to boost your career, or to change careers. According to a survey by the Graduate Management Admission Council®, at least 75% of the class of 2006 felt that they had made the right decision in choosing to pursue a graduate management degree.

Your reason for pursuing an MBA and the time and resources at your disposal will help you determine the type of MBA program that is right for you. Just as you want to be selective in your choice of school, you also want a school that is selective about its students. Your classmates significantly affect the quality of your MBA experience, so be sure to choose a school with a selective admissions process that requires the GMAT® exam.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
TWO YEARS, FULL-TIME	Four semesters, or six quarters, taken over two years. School is the first priority. Most students do not work full time. Students need defined career goals for greatest return on investment. Students have resources to devote majority of time to study. Can be time- and money-intensive.
ONE YEAR, FULL-TIME	Typically takes 11 to 16 months. Very rigorous admissions requirements. School is the first priority. Most students do not work full time.
PART-TIME	Courses scheduled throughout year often spread out over longer duration. Can take up to four to five years to complete. Many offer same specialization opportunities as full-time programs. Courses often scheduled outside of regular working hours. May not offer the same services as a full-time program.
EXECUTIVE	Typically completed during evenings and weekends over two years. Designed specifically to enhance the careers of working business professionals managers, and executives. Usually more costly than full-time programs
JOINT/DUAL	Many take three to four years to complete. MBA is partnered with another graduate program. Can take less time to complete than two separate degrees, (eg., JD/MBA, MHA/MBA).
ONLINE	Typically self-paced. 24/7 access provides easy scheduling for those who work full time. Many online MBA professors are active business professionals. Can cost considerably less than traditional programs. May not offer other services (e.g., career placement).



The steps outlined below will help you understand the process and ideal timeline involved in moving forward with your MBA degree. Although the time frame below shows an

average for MBA preparation, our research shows that people take anywhere from three months to three years to navigate the path to graduate business school.

Assess & Analyze

2 Years Out

Gather Information

18 months - 2 Years Out

Find Your Program

18 Months Out

Prepare

12 Months Out

EVALUATE

- ☐ Assess career goals.
- ☐ Consider the value of the MBA.
- Analyze cost vs. benefit of the MBA.
- ☐ Talk with others who've made the transition.
- ☐ Visit your base
 Educational Service Office
 for more information.
- ☐ Start looking for a mentor

- ☐ Get a mentor
- ☐ Check available transition resources.
- Research MBA program timelines and application schedules.
- Consider timing of transition and the MBA process.
- ☐ Evaluate family considerations.
- ☐ Take a first look at finances.
- ☐ Check on tuition assistance programs.

Pre-commissioned and junior officers and ROTC participants:
Start early! Remember, your
GMAT® score is good for five years.

- PREPARE
- ☐ Begin your program search.
 Check out www.mba.
 com/militaryfriendly for a
 list of schools that welcome
 military personnel.
- Consider what type of program is right for you.
- Select your "dream school" and three to four others, and determine entrance requirements.
- Reconsider funding resources: GI Bill, tuition assistance, loans, scholarships, and grants.
- Register for prerequisite or supplemental classes.
- ☐ Check in with your mentor
- ☐ Start building your business wardrobe for information sessions and interviews.

- Prepare for and take the GMAT® exam.
 Talk to your ESO about reimbursement for the GMAT® exam registration fee.
- Begin application process.
- ☐ Contact programs of interest. Ask about military clubs, groups, and resources.
- Attend information sessions.
- Consult with counselors. Get advice from your mentor.

"60% of MBA graduates use their degrees to enhance their careers; others earn the degree for skill development, personal development, or to change career tracks."

2006 survey by the Graduate Management Admission Council®

Apply Effectively

9 Months Out

Make Your Decisions

6 Months Out

COMMIT

- ☐ Prepare and submit complete applications.
- ☐ Consider how you will market yourself and create professional look.
- ☐ Be sure to seek financial aid.
- ☐ Be prepared to explain in your application or interview any gaps in academic or employment record.

- ☐ Seek an on-campus interview.
 - Focus on leadership
 - Demonstrate your "fit" with the school.
 - Market yourself
- ☐ Take advantage of your mentor and network (colleagues, alumni, etc.).
- ☐ Understand your financial aid package.

"A mentor can enhance your career and educational development. Find someone who's followed the path you are considering. A mentor can provide information, guidance, motivation, and assistance with networking. And you won't be going it all alone."

Dr. Fred Rodriguez

Director, Education Services Ft. Riley, Kansas

"...[L]ike any test, you can improve your score through preparation and practice. I choose to attend a GMAT® requiring school because the schools that require it generally have stronger reputations than schools that do not."

Carla Sevilla

Captain, U.S. Marine Corps
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

GMAT® FACTS

What is the GMAT®, anyway?

The Graduate Management Admission Test® (GMAT®) helps business schools assess the qualifications of applicants for advanced study in business and management. Your GMAT® scores are only one predictor of academic performance in the first year of a graduate management program.

What the GMAT® Exam Measures

The GMAT® exam measures verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills that you have developed over a long period of time in your education and work.

Format and Scores

The GMAT® exam consists of three main parts, the Analytical Writing Assessment, the Quantitative section, and the Verbal section, which take about four hours to complete.

Total GMAT® scores range from 200 to 800. Two-thirds of test takers score between 400 and 600.

The Verbal and Quantitative scores range from 0 to 60. Scores below 9 and above 44 for the Verbal section or below 7 and above 50 for the Quantitative section are rare. Scores for the AWA range from 0 to 6 in half-point intervals.

Unofficial scores from the Verbal and Quantitative sections, along with the Total score, are available immediately after you complete the test. You can choose to receive your Official Score Report online or through the mail within about 20 calendar days of testing. You may select up to five schools to receive your scores; they will also receive them within about 20 calendar days of your testing appointment.

More Support: www.mba.com/mba/taketheGMAT



GMATPrep® Software

This free software is available to help you prepare for the Computer-Adaptive GMAT® exam using real GMAT® test questions and

full answer explanations. The GMATPrep® software uses the same technology as the official GMAT® exam to give you a hands-on example of the test-day experience.

The Official Guide for GMAT® Review, 11th Edition

This guide is the only GMAT® review book that contains actual GMAT® questions and thorough answer explanations. It comes with a diagnostic section to focus your study efforts, a comprehensive math section, English grammar review, and test-taking tips.

The Official Guide: Quantitative and Verbal Review

These supplemental guides are designed to help you focus on the test section in which you need most improvement. Each supplement offers nearly 300 real GMAT® questions not found in *The Official Guide for GMAT® Review*, 11th Edition, with answers and explanations, test-taking tips and strategies, and a comprehensive math or English grammar review.

GMAT® Paper Tests

Three sets of three easy-to-download paper tests contain real GMAT® questions that are retired and out of circulation. Each set of paper tests includes timed sections, an answer sheet, and a way to convert your raw score to the equivalent GMAT® score.



How can I best transition from the military into an academic setting?

Before entering the military you were accustomed to a classroom environment, but now that you have spent some time working and serving in the military, you have been away from the academic world.

We've interviewed military personnel like you who've made the transition from military service to the classroom.

To read more go to www.mba.com/militaryfriendly, where you can find a list of schools interested in recruiting applicants with military experience and profiles where students with military backgrounds discuss their experiences as they returned to the classroom.

Here is what they had to say:

My military experience helped me to stay focused and dedicated to school. It also helped me take a leadership role in school clubs.

Daryl Wilkerson

Lieutenant, U.S. Navy University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Going to business school means a lot of uncertainty and a lot of unknowns. That surprise and challenge can be good. It is a difficult transition because you have to go back into an academic environment.

Benjamin Hur

Captain, U.S. Marine Corps Massachusetts Institute of Technology The desire to gain cross-cultural exposure was a major reason I chose [my school]. As an American there, I was in the minority, which helped broaden my perspective, and I learned as much from my colleagues as from the curriculum.

Philip Romanelli

Major, U.S. Army University of Cambridge

It's been an enjoyable experience to say the least.

Nevertheless, it is a lot of hard work. If you decide to leave the military and pursue an MBA, you need to be mentally prepared for the workload.

Marc Ortiz

Captain, U.S. Army Texas Christian University



Whether you are moving up the ranks or transitioning into a career in business, an MBA can help you succeed. Now is an ideal time to set career goals and evaluate your options for achieving them.

The best way to get started is to talk to your Educational Service Officer and start looking for a mentor to help you through the process. Leverage the resources close by to get a head start, and talk to schools along the way about what they offer to students with military experience.

A number of resources are available to help you take the next step.

Visit www.mba.com/military

You'll find ways to—

- use CareerLeader® to plan your post-military, post-MBA career;
- evaluate MBA programs and concentrations that are right for you through mba.com school search service;
- attend MBA recruitment events of interest to you and consider visiting schools;
- download free GMAT® test-prep software;
- register for the GMAT® exam; and
- link to and download even more information about the MBA.

DID YOU KNOW?

DANTES (the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support) will reimburse your GMAT® exam fees if you are an active member of the U.S. military.

NOTES:

QUESTIONS FOR YOU I believe an MBA is right for me because... Traits that I have in common with MBAs and business professionals include... The post-MBA careers that best fit my personal strengths, interests, abilities, and work-related values are... The type of business school, company, and corporate cultures that would suit me would be... **QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS** Do you have clubs or affinity groups for military personnel? What will happen if I am deployed? What parts of the application do you weigh most heavily? **QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT STUDENTS/ALUMNI** What is it really like getting an MBA? Does/did the program meet your expectations? What would you do differently if you were to start the MBA program all over again?

What's the student culture at your school like?

Graduate Management Admission Council®

Creating Access to Graduate Business Education®

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GMAC® is a proud ROA STARs Partner Standing Together for America's Reservists

The Operation MBA Planner is an educational tool for military personnel who are interested in obtaining their graduate business degree. More information is available by visiting www.mba.com/military or by sending an e-mail to webmaster@gmac.com.

The Graduate Management Admission Council® is the international, not-for-profit association behind the Graduate Management Admission Test® (GMAT®) used by 220,000 prospective MBA students and 4,000 programs at 1,800 business schools worldwide each year.

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