www.acalltocollege.org
Newark High School
314 Granville Street
Newark, OH 43055
740.670.7424 info@acalltocollege.org

Combining Military and College

There are many pathways for students who wish to combine the military and college. Options include enrolling in an ROTC program, utilizing the Guard/Reserves, attending a service academy or taking classes intermittently while on active duty.

ROTC (the following pages offer more in-depth information for students interested in this option)	(Reserve Officers' Training Corps) is a college program that trains students to become officers in the U.S. Military. You take regular classes for your degree while also taking military science classes. Upon graduation, you graduate as a commissioned officer and serve a required period of active or reserve duty. *Students intending to participate in ROTC should be communicating with their college's ROTC recruiter. The key to moving the process along is submitting the ONGSP. ONGSP stands for* ***the Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program****. It is a state-funded program that covers 100% of tuition charges for eligible members of the Ohio Army and Air National Guard.* This means you are guard approved and once submitted, initiates communication between ONG and the BGSU Bursar's (financial aid) office. ROTC opportunities are available through the Army, Navy, Air Force and Space Force (via the Air Force).
National Guard/Reserves	Once initial military training is complete, the standard serve requirement is just one weekend a month and two weeks a year, which leaves most of the month open for classes and studying. Contact a local recruiter to begin this process.
Military Service Academy	See page 29 of our Planning for College booklet for an overview of this process.
Active Duty	Encourage students interested in Active Duty to communicate with our ROTC Technical Sergeant Josh Parrish. Josh can be reached at ext. 2817, room G243. **Share ASVAB date with these students.**

You do not need a scholarship to join any of the branches. All three let you enroll in ROTC college classes with no obligation, compete for campus based 2 and 3 year scholarships, and commission the same way scholarship cadets do.

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Army Vs Navy vs Air Force ROTC: Which Branch is Right for You?

If you're a high school student weighing ROTC, the first fork in the road is the branch. Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC all lead to the same destination - a commission as a military officer and a paid for (or mostly paid for) college education - but the day to day experience, the scholarship math, the service obligation, and the careers on the other side are genuinely different. This guide compares the three honestly. There is no best branch, only a best fit for you.

Culture: What your week actually looks like

All three programs follow the same basic shape; you're a full-time college student who also takes a military science class, attends a weekly leadership lab, and does physical training (PT) several mornings a week. The differences are in flavor and intensity.

Army ROTC tends to be the most field-oriented. Expect land navigation, ruck marches, squad tactics, and a field training exercise (FTX) most semesters. The culminating event is Cadet Summer Training (Advanced Camp) at Fort Knox in Kentucky between junior and senior year of college. If you like being outside, getting dirty, and leading small teams under stress, Army ROTC delivers that early and often.

Navy ROTC is the most academically oriented. Midshipmen on scholarship must complete calculus and physics regardless of major, and the Navy strongly steers scholarship winners toward STEM majors (roughly 85% of these scholarships go to technical majors). Summer includes training cruises aboard ships or submarines. Marine option midshipmen follow a separate, more infantry-flavored track ending in Officer Candidates School at Quantico, VA.

Air Force ROTC front-loads classroom leadership studies and back-loads intensity: the make-or-break event is Field Training, a roughly two-week evaluation at Maxwell AFB in Alabama after sophomore year that you must pass to enter the upper-division program. Day to day, many cadets describe Air Force ROTC as the most "normal college life" compatible of the three.

None of this is boot camp. You wear a uniform one to three days per week, and the rest of the time you're a regular student.

Scholarship structure: real differences in the fine print

The money is where branch choice gets concrete.

- Army gives scholarship winners a choice: full tuition and fees, or room and board (capped around 10-12,000 per year). At a state school with modest tuition, taking the room and board option and stacking other aid on tuition can be the better deal. All Army scholarships add a $1,200/year book allowance and a $420/month stipend during the school year.
- Navy pays full tuition and fees at the schools where it's offered, plus $750/year for books and a stipend that starts at $250/month freshman year and rises to $400/month senior year. Room and board are not covered.
- Air Force Awards come in types: Type 1 pays full tuition and fees anywhere (a small minority of awards), Type 2 pays up to $18,000/year, and Type 7 pays up to the in-state rate at public schools (convertible to a 3-year Type 2 if you go out of state). All include a $900/year book stipend and a monthly stipend from $300 to $500.

Practical takeaway: Many colleges sweeten the pot with free or discounted room and board for ROTC scholarship winners. That institutional grant can matter as much as the branch difference - it's worth filtering schools by it.

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Service obligation: read this part twice

- Army: an eight year total obligation, typically served as 4 years active duty plus 4 in the Individual Ready Reserve - or 8 years entirely in the Army National Guard or Reserve. Army is the only branch where serving part-time while starting a civilian career is a mainstream, supported path.
- Navy: 5 years of active duty minimum. Aviation adds substantially more - Navy pilots owe roughly 8 years after earning their wings, which means a decade-plus of total service.
- Air Force: 4 years of active duty for most career fields. Pilots owe 10 years after completing pilot training, combat systems officers and air battle managers owe 6.

Every branch's clock starts at commissioning, not at graduation from high school. And in every branch, aviation and certain technical fields extend the commitment - go in with eyes open.

Careers paths after commissioning

Army commissions the most officers by far and has the widest variety of entry level branches: infantry, armor, aviation, engineers, cyber, military intelligence, medical services, logistics and more. You'll compete for your branch during senior year of college based on class ranking and preferences.

Navy careers are built around platforms: surface warfare, submarines, naval aviation, and specialized fields like nuclear power (which brings significant bonuses and a demanding academic pipeline). Expect sea duty and deployments aboard ships as a defining feature. Marine Option graduates enter the full range of Marine Corps officer specialities.

Air Force careers split between rated (pilot, combat systems officer, air battle manager) and non-rated fields (engineering, cyber, intelligence, logistics, maintenance, space operations). AFROTC is also the primary commissioning source for the Space Force, which is worth knowing if you're aiming at orbital operations or cyber.

All three national scholarships are competitive, but they select differently.

- Army runs the largest scholarship program and evaluates a broad whole-person file - academics, athletics, and leadership all weigh in. It is generally considered the most attainable of the three for a solid all-around candidate, partly because of volume.
- Navy is the most major-sensitive. A strong candidate intending to major in history faces much longer odds than the same candidate in mechanical engineering. Calculus readiness matters.
- Air Force is highly test score and academics driven, and the full-ride Type 1 awards go to a small fraction of selectees - many winners receive Type 2 or Type 7, which changes the financial picture depending on your school choice.

How to actually decide

Choose the branch whose job you want, not the scholarship that seems easiest to win. A free degree is four years, your commission is the start of a career. Visit the units at your target schools, talk to current cadets and the recruiting operations officer, and apply early in the cycle - every branch's application typically opens in early summer before senior year.

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