

ASU is the No. 2 public university for GI Bill students

From leadership opportunities to nationally recognized support, ASU has built a culture for veterans seeking academic achievement and career success

By Marshall Terrill , ASU News
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For Arizona State University student David Faustino Hernandez, the university's commitment to veterans goes far beyond symbolic gestures or dedicated support services.

In his view, ASU has built a culture where veterans are not only welcomed but also empowered to lead, contribute and thrive.

"Arizona State University is not just a school for veterans but is driven by veterans," said Hernandez, who served six years on active duty in the U.S. Navy and is currently in the Naval Reserve.

Hernandez said that veteran influence can be seen across campus, from student leadership and mentorship programs to faculty, staff and administrators who understand the unique experiences of military service members.

"There's a genuine appreciation for what veterans bring to the table," said Hernandez, a third-year student majoring in aeronautical management technology in the [Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering](#). "You don't feel like you're on the outside looking in. You're part of the community and part of the mission."

That veteran-centered approach, he said, is one of the reasons ASU has earned a national reputation as one of the country's most military-friendly universities, with more than 20,000 military-affiliated learners.

That reputation is also reflected in the numbers.

According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the National Center for Education Statistics' primary benchmark for comparing colleges and universities, ASU is No. 2

among public institutions nationwide for students using GI Bill benefits. Among top-tier research universities, ASU is No. 1, ahead of Texas A&M and the University of South Florida.

It's welcome news to the university's top leader, who sees it as validation of ASU's longstanding commitment to those who have served.

"Enhancing access to education and supporting student success are central to our university charter and our commitment to military veterans," said ASU President Michael M. Crow, whose father was an enlisted Navy sailor. "Demonstrating our respect and value for those who have served is in our DNA, so when we say ASU is a fully 'locked-in' military-friendly university, we live it every day."

The GI Bill opens the door to a wide range of educational opportunities, covering tuition, fees, housing, books and supplies for undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as vocational training, certification exams and apprenticeships. Through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, eligible veterans can receive up to 100% of in-state tuition at public universities, while students attending private institutions can receive up to nearly \$30,000 per academic year.

For many military families, the GI Bill's impact extends beyond the service member. Eligible veterans can transfer unused education benefits to a spouse or dependent children, helping open the door to new educational opportunities for the next generation.

[Shawn Banzhaf](#), executive director of ASU's [Pat Tillman Veterans Center](#), said the university has spent years building a comprehensive support network for military-connected students, anchored by the legacy of [Pat Tillman](#) and strengthened by partnerships across the university.

"Our students choose ASU because we've built a legacy of excellence in serving veterans," Banzhaf said. "When you combine dedicated support services with the opportunities that come from earning a degree at a top research university, it's easy to see why so many veterans continue to make ASU their destination of choice."

It certainly nudged Gabby Rodriguez from Fresno, California, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2017 to 2024, to consider attending ASU.

Rodriguez, a fourth-year social work major in the [Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions](#), said she was drawn to the university not only because of its location but also because of the strength of its veteran community. She said finding fellow students with similar life experiences has helped her thrive academically and personally.

"I knew that ASU was going to support me in the ways that I needed," Rodriguez said. "Finding connections with like-minded people and building friendships also helps me to excel in my environment."

The GI Bill has also made it possible for Rodriguez to focus on her education without financial burden.

"It's amazing that I'm going to graduate college next year and be debt-free," Rodriguez said. "And that's truly one of my biggest values right now, is learning how to have a healthy lifestyle with my finances. This only helps it even more."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Naval reservist David Hernandez, a third-year aeronautical management technology student, is using his GI Bill to earn a bachelor's degree before returning to active duty with the Navy. ASU ranks second among all public universities for students using the GI Bill to pursue higher education. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News