

Students enlist for military education

Seniors opt to spend next four years at military academy, diverging from norm

by Jessi Zook

With the school year rapidly coming to an end, seniors are finalizing their post high school plans, with some deciding to attend military academies.

According to Post High School Counseling Department Chair James Conroy, very few seniors go onto military academies. “The unique lifestyle and discipline might not attract everyone. Furthermore, acceptance rates to military academies are extremely low.”

Students choose to attend military academies for a variety of reasons. “All students who attend an academy have some desire to serve their country,” Conroy said.

Finances, a desire for structure in one’s life and family backgrounds also motivate students to consider military academies.

Senior Brendan Gloyd is one student who has chosen to attend the United States Naval Academy next year.

“In terms of benefits, everything that is offered at the Naval Academy is unbelievable,” he said.

According to Gloyd, the Naval Academy is a financially smart decision. “I receive a free college education. I’m not paying for room and board, food, medical care, or uniforms.” Gloyd is looking forward to getting out of college debt free.

Senior Josh Lambert, who will be attending the U.S. Air Force



Members of the West Point Military Academy throw their caps in the air during their graduation ceremony | West Point

Academy after high school, agreed that going to a Service Academy is a financially smart decision. “I won’t pay any tuition. In fact, I actually get paid to attend the Air Force Academy.”

According to Conroy, many students’ college decisions are influenced by the financial component.

“Students going to military academies are getting a full ride, four year scholarship. It’s amazing to come away with a free college education and a degree.”

Gloyd was also drawn to the Naval Academy because of the service opportunity. “Service is something that’s really important to me in other areas of my life. I realized that if I want to continue that tradition of helping others, the Navy is a great way to do that.”

Yet, despite all of the benefits, Lambert acknowledged that the college experience will be very

different for him compared to students going to traditional colleges.

“My basic training starts in June. Once we get to the Academy, we have to observe military customs and courtesies, we are expected to wear uniforms every day, and must prepare inspection ready rooms every morning.”

Lambert said that one of the only similarities between his academy and a traditional university is that along with his Air Force responsibilities, he’ll go to classes and graduate with a degree in Aerospace Engineering.

This nontraditional college experience was what drew Gloyd to the Naval Academy. “The Academy is extremely focused and very structured, which is something that I knew I wanted in a school.”

Once students decided they would like to attend a service academy, the application process was strenuous.

According to Lambert, the

process was difficult and took much longer than other college applications.

“The application involved a physical test, a medical test, three letters of recommendation, three teacher evaluations, a congressional nomination, and many essays.” The entire process took Lambert over a year to complete.

Gloyd had a similar application experience, which involved a candidate fitness assessment, a congressional nomination, and approval from the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board.

According to Gloyd, getting approval from the Medical Examination Review Board was the most difficult aspect of the application.

“Once you get medically qualified, anything that happens to you is now the government’s responsibility to pay for. The board is very careful about approving people

because they’re trying to eliminate any risk or liability they can.”

Gloyd’s application process took over six months.

“The application process is a lot more strenuous than what’s expected when applying to any other college. It’s a series of hurdles that applicants have to jump over,” Conroy said.

In attending a military academy, students are also required to serve after graduation. All service academy graduates are expected to serve for a minimum of eight years. Five of those years must be active duty and the remaining three may be completed as an inactive reserve.

Gloyd had a positive outlook on his future service. “During the time that I’m serving, I’m getting an officer’s salary and military benefits.” Gloyd looks forward to graduating with a guaranteed job in place.

Gloyd plans to serve in surface warfare or the marines after he graduates, either of which would satisfy his serving requirements.

Lambert is also excited to serve. “After attending the Academy, I’m hoping to fly the C17 for the Air Force and have the opportunity to use my skills in service to my country.” Depending on how his eight years of service go, Lambert plans to continue serving after he completes his requirement.

As basic training approaches for Lambert, he is looking forward to what the Air Force Academy has in store for him.

“I’ve always felt the military would be a good fit for me and who I am as an individual. The Air Force will provide me with a lot of great opportunities unique to the Academy and will prepare me for the future.”

Gap year provides unique opportunity

Gap year, though unpopular, proves to be powerful.

by Beth Wall

Despite its seemingly miniscule population, it seems that gap year yields successful students.

Gap Year Coordinator Gretchen Stauder said, “I’ve never heard of a student who has come back and said ‘I wish I hadn’t taken a gap year.’ I’ve definitely heard the opposite, with students coming back and saying they wish they had.”

Senior Spencer Lavin said that though he had been thinking about a gap year for a few months, he was convinced when he “heard back from all my colleges and it didn’t pan out exactly how I thought it would so I figured might as well take a year off, why rush it?”

Lavin plans to spend a few months hiking through the Patagonia mountains in Argentina and Chile, before starting school at a yet-to-be-decided university in 2018.

Though Lavin said he’s excited to travel next year, he has also faced many skeptics.

“Half of the responses I get are ‘wow, that’s really cool’, the other half are kind of like ‘oh, that’s interesting...why not college?’ And they expect that I’m not going to go back to school,” he said.

Despite expectations, when students do return to school, it seems that they often return more confident and ready for independent life.

Senior Lily Thorton said that

one of the main attractions for her was the opportunity to adjust to living on her own. “I want to know that I can take care of myself before I also have to deal with schoolwork.”

Thorton said, “I want to be able to do something I wouldn’t get a chance to do without a gap year. After college, people really start their life.”

“From everyone I’ve talked to, you end up going to college with a lot less pressure and a better sense of who you are,” said senior Rachel Skolnik.

Skolnik was inspired to spend next year in Israel after going on a trip to Hungary last summer. When talking to her friends from this trip, Skolnik realized that gap years are “actually pretty common. A lot more kids do gap years at other schools, it’s just not very common at New Trier.”

“Where we live, it’s expected that you go directly to college and get your degree and directly get a job, and I guess that just wasn’t for me. I’ve been doing school for twelve years, I figured it’s time to take a break,” said Lavin.

Many gap year students felt that because the route is so uncommon on the North Shore, the preparation for and discovery of gap year opportunities has mostly been a process conducted independent of the school.

“I didn’t really talk about it with New Trier at all,” said Skolnik. “I just kind of mentioned it to my post-high school counselor after I had already decided.”

Thorton agreed, saying that though the Post-High School Counseling office was encouraging, she was mostly told to do her own

independent research.

“They don’t deal with gap years as much, so it’s been kind of a solitary road, trying to figure this out myself, which is part of the fun, I guess,” said Lavin.

One of the most notable resources for potential gap year students is Chicago’s annual Gap Year Fair, which is hosted by New Trier. It welcomes nearly 50 program representatives from all around the world, and allows interested students to ask any questions. This is where Thorton first started thinking about the opportunity.

Stauder encouraged rising seniors not to entirely write off taking a gap year. “There’s plenty of time to decide. Pay attention to it, and explore it,” she said.

“Talk to people that are doing a gap year, even if they’re not doing a program you’re interested in, I think they generally have the same outlook on doing one,” said Skolnik. “Talk about it with the colleges you want to apply to, a lot of them are really open about it, and want you to do one.”

Stauder agreed, saying that “Studies have shown that when [gap year students] matriculate, they have a higher retention rate, and their grades are higher. Colleges look at it favorably.”

She also said this is likely because the students “are ready, and they know what they want. They’re not just blindly following a path, colleges appreciate that they’ve had a chance to get off the treadmill and say ‘this is what I really want.’”

College isn’t the only option for seniors

by Helen Fagan

A common stereotype associated with the New Trier “bubble” is that the school is full of teens with the expectation that after high school, seniors continue on to college.

Many assume that because New Trier boasts a 99% graduation rate, that most of these seniors are going to college.

But every year approximately 98% of New Trier seniors enroll in post secondary education institutions within 16 months of graduation, according to the Post High-School Counseling department.

The current Class of 2017 has 1,021 seniors, meaning, approximately 20 students out of this class will not attend college next year.

If this is the case, there’s a group of kids large enough to be their own advisory that don’t attend college. Why don’t we hear about them? Most seniors can point out the kids who are heading to the Ivy Leagues, attending service academies, or even name one or two individuals taking a gap year. But even though over 20 Trevians do not attend a college or university after graduation, this post high-school option is rarely discussed.

Senior Chris Hegevall-Clarke has unique plans for after graduation. He intends to move to Vail, Colorado with a friend to work on a resort in the area during ski season.

He said he does not know exactly what job he will take, but intends to land “any entry level

position like lift operator, fry cook, cashier or ski patrol.”

Clarke’s reasoning for his post-high school plans stem from wanting a different experience than what academics bring and gain real-world experience.

He said, “I wanted to have some experience living and working away from home to hopefully help me once I do go to school.”

Clarke deferred his enrollment to University of Colorado at Boulder until the fall of 2018.

New Trier alumnus Augie Marsh, who graduated with the NT Class of 2015, attended one year of college at the University of Iowa before returning home last fall. He now works as a technician at a local Subaru dealership.

Similar to Clarke, Marsh feels that college simply didn’t align with his future plans. He said, “I wasn’t productive at all, and I think that really sapped any interest I might’ve had.”

Marsh said he left college in order to pursue his dream of a career in the auto industry. He said, “Doing something I enjoy (working on cars) has been much more rewarding.”

He feels that he does not need a college degree to have a fulfilling future. Marsh currently has no plans to go back to school, but hopes to open his own auto detailing shop someday.

NT Class of 2016 alum Alyssa Faber is also leaving the University of Iowa. She chose to leave after her freshman year because she didn’t feel that Iowa was a good fit and is unsure about what she wants to do.