Civilian careers in the health sciences are often a natural extension of military training for many veterans who have left the services. Many schools offer reduced tuition for veterans in addition to college credit for previous military experience.

**Nova Southeastern University**

Nova Southeastern University (NSU) is the ninth-largest, not-for-profit, independent university in the United States. NSU was established in 1964 as Nova University of Advanced Technology and merged with Southeastern University of Health Sciences in 1994. Today, NSU’s 314-acre main campus is in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., with distance sites throughout the state of Florida, the United States and nine other countries.

NSU houses 18 different schools/colleges (Medical Sciences, Psychological Studies, Pharmacy, Arts and Sciences, Dental Medicine, Education, Law, Optometry, Computer and Information Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, Nursing, Business, Oceanography, College Preparatory, Early Childhood Education, Health Care Sciences, Human Service/Health and Justice, and Osteopathic Medicine) and offers a number of different undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees. The biomedical informatics program is housed in the College of Osteopathic Medicine. Currently, the biomedical informatics program is in the process of developing a Ph.D. program in the field and a master’s degree in interprofessional clinical informatics.

“Currently offering a Master of Science in biomedical informatics, graduate certificates in medical informatics and public health informatics, an AMIA 10x10 certificate, and an MS in nursing informatics, the biomedical informatics program prepares students for a number of different career opportunities in hospitals, health care delivery systems, health IT (HIT) systems vendors, e-health companies, insurers, pharmaceutical companies, public health agencies and academic institutions,” said Christine Nelson, program manager for the biomedical informatics program. “The program’s curriculum is designed with focal areas in clinical informatics (specifically application and evaluation of HIT), computer science in regards to health informatics, and the business/management of HIT. Particularly, a multitude of skills-based electives allow an interprofessional student body to tailor its studies.”

Online or on-site courses allow for working professionals, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, medical technicians, coders, IT professionals, business/management professionals, educators, researchers and others, to earn a degree or certificate without career disruption.

“Types of jobs include chief medical information officers (CMIOs), nursing information officers, chief information officers (CIOs), project managers, implementation specialists, systems analysts, project designers, researchers, template writers, educators/trainers [and] others,” said Nelson. “The program’s students and alumni have been hired or promoted by Cerner Corporation, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Cleveland Clinic Florida, Kaiser Permanente, Aetna Life Insurance Co., DELL, Community Health..."
At ATSU, our students and faculty are part of a distinguished osteopathic heritage based on an integrated approach that includes the body, mind and spirit," said Scott. "Each program receives special emphasis on preventive medicine and outreach to underserved populations with the hope that graduates will choose a path to become a health leader in their community. All students are empowered to better understand the growing needs of domestic and global health and wellness issues. Through community-based learning, students gain firsthand knowledge of what it is like to work at the community level."

Students at ATSU's Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ASDOH) lead or participate in more than 100 community outreach events, serve more than 5,000 underserved individuals and engage with nearly 60 organizations.

In 2013, ATSU's newest school, the Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health (MOSDOH), was granted initial accreditation from the Commission on Dental Accreditation and opened its doors to an inaugural class of 42 students. ATSU-MOSDOH places emphasis on graduating dentists who have an in-depth understanding of and a desire to serve populations in need.

ATSU's School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona wields a curriculum where students study on the Arizona campus for their first year only. After year one, students spend their second, third and fourth years of osteopathic medical training in the clinical milieu of a community health center and the hospitals located in the catchment area of these health centers. This model enables students not just to learn about the scientific and clinical principles of medicine, but also to experience how legislation such as the Affordable Care Act plays out in clinical practice.

"ATSU is approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for the certification of students eligible to receive VA educational benefits. Our personnel are aware and committed to working with veterans and active duty soldiers to ensure student success," said Scott.

On April 27, 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13607, establishing the Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses and Other Family Members. ATSU fully complies with the seven principles and is dedicated to helping veteran and non-veteran students succeed.

"All students at ATSU are provided access to tools that will support their well-being: mind, body and spirit. Everything is provided, from tutoring and guidance, to learning resources and counseling services, to a complete focus on wellness through the university's Still Well programs," said Scott.

Kaplan University

"Kaplan University was originally the American Institute of Commerce when founded back in 1938; it focused on education for female students at a time when
college access for women was quite limited," said Scott A. Kilgore, senior vice president of military affairs. "Providing educational opportunities to non-traditional students has been a hallmark of our school ever since. Today, that includes working adults, those families serving our country, those in remote areas—anywhere there is talent, which is everywhere. Our namesake, Stanley Kaplan, believed [that] ability, not birthright or social standing, should define educational opportunities. Thus, the pillars of accessibility and opportunity are what Kaplan University stands for."

Currently, Kaplan University is expanding the number of military occupations that are mapped into college credit. This can significantly accelerate the path to a degree.

"It just makes sense to make the most of the incredible training our military members already have," said Kilgore. "That requires a very specific mapping of course outcomes with military training outcomes to ensure all gaps are covered. These are not shortcuts to a degree in regard to what is learned—rather, it ensures all elements included in the degree are covered and validated. Our military students wouldn't have it any other way—they don't want to cut corners, but they don't want to wait for others to catch up to what they already know, either."

The university offers over 180 degree and certificate programs. However, for the readers of Military Medical & Veterans Affairs Forum, the most relevant are health science programs, in which up to 73 percent of the coursework can be earned through military training.

"Our associate program is the first step and positions them to continue their education in a broad spectrum of health care fields, including telemetry, health care administration, office management, information management and other allied health specialties," said Kilgore. "For many of these careers, we encourage our associate-level graduates to continue in one of our bachelor programs. The good news is there may be additional credit applied toward their bachelor's degree and even a master's degree."

The university offers reduced tuition—55 percent for active duty members to minimize their out-of-pocket expenses. It also recognizes the role the military family plays and has awarded over $5 million dollars in scholarships for military spouses and dependents.

"The work we do to recognize occupational skills is extremely well-received within the military," said Kilgore. "Specifically, we recognize medical occupations, combat arms, military police and legal specialists, and the list continues to expand. Even if a member's occupation has not been mapped, we analyze all military transcripts for credit. We also support our military students with special military leave policies and military-focused advisors."

**WALDEN UNIVERSITY**

For more than 40 years, Walden has been serving a diverse community of working adults to provide them with the opportunity to transform themselves as scholar-practitioners so that they can advance their careers and effect positive social change.

The School of Health Sciences is part of Walden University's College of Health Sciences along with the School of Nursing. The degree programs in the School of Health Sciences are aimed at helping students develop the critical and creative thinking skills required to address the health needs of individuals as well as local and global communities through health care services, research and education.

"We offer a variety of health sciences programs in our school, from bachelor's to Ph.D. programs. A few include: B.S. in public health, B.S. in healthcare management, Master of Public Health (MPH), Master of Healthcare Administration (MHA), M.S. in clinical research administration, M.S. in health informatics, Ph.D. in public health and Ph.D. in health services," said Dr. Jörg Westermann, the associate dean for the School of Health Sciences and the interim associate dean for the School of Public Policy and Administration at Walden University. "We create degree programs with an eye to emerging needs and long-term trends. We look at what society needs, what the workforce is demanding and what opportunities students are seeking. As a result, we recently added a M.S. in health education and promotion program as well as a professional doctorate in public health (DrPH) program."

The M.S. in health education and promotion is targeted toward students who are looking for a health education-oriented degree and are not necessarily interested in a more science-oriented MPH degree that requires biostatistics and epidemiology. The program provides students with the skills and knowledge needed to assess community health needs; plan, implement and evaluate health programs; coordinate health education services; and advocate for specific health issues. Upon graduation, students in the program will have the skills and experiences to work in a variety of settings including, but not limited to: nonprofit organizations, community health agencies, colleges and universities, business and corporations, and faith-based organizations.
The DrPH is an applied doctoral degree and might be of interest to people who are looking for a degree that is practice-oriented and puts more emphasis on management and leadership skills instead of research skills.

“Students gain advanced skills to assume new leadership responsibilities, [learn] application and design of practice-based research to inform public health practice and gain a better understanding of policy and advocacy skills required by leaders in public health settings,” said Westermann.

The program prepares students for public health leadership careers in health departments, managed care organizations, community-based organizations, hospitals, consulting firms, international agencies, state and federal agencies, and clinics, among others.

“Our programs prepare students for a number of exciting careers in health care and the public health field,” said Westermann. “The MHA program prepares our students for a career leading to executive leadership positions in the health care industry and is designed to enhance management, interpersonal and organizational skills and abilities. The Walden program is also designed to instill self-development, critical thinking and a desire for lifelong learning into our students.”

The career options for MHA graduates include group practice administration, urgent care facilities, research facilities, health services, medical information management, long-term care, international care organizations and health insurance carriers, among many others.

“At Walden, we also offer a generalist MPH degree that focuses on both the core and interdisciplinary areas essential to the practice of public health. Students attain knowledge and skills in disease prevention and health promotion in order to improve the health of communities,” said Westermann.

“The MPH degree prepares students for a variety of jobs in such areas as chronic disease prevention, health promotion, public health administration, epidemiology and environmental health. Some of the types of places where our graduates may be employed include local and state health departments/health ministries, federal government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based agencies and private industry.”

The university’s Ph.D. in public health prepares students who seek a career as faculty and/or conducting research at a college or university or other settings to protect the health of communities, inform public health issues/problems and become advocates for change in their communities.

**Conclusion**

Altogether, the wide variety of career training in the health sciences offered by schools such as Nova Southeastern University, A.T. Still University, Kaplan University and Walden University are programs of interest for veterans transitioning into a civilian career. *

For more information, contact M2VA Editor Chris McCoy at chrism@kmimediatgroup.com or search our online archives for related stories at www.m2va-kmi.com.