1.) Navy Proposing Bold Changes in how it Teaches Sailors in New Education Plan / 12 FEB 19
USNI News, Ben Werner
https://news.usni.org/2019/02/12/41094
The Navy is pushing a series of education reforms to better train enlisted sailors and officers to face the increasing military capability posed by near-peer competitors and to fight complex, high-end wars.

2.) MCPON Testifies to Congress, Advocates for Quality of Life Resources / 8 FEB 19
Navy Live Blog, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith
There are three specific areas I would like to discuss, that from my fleet engagements and numerous conversations with Sailors, I know are foremost on their minds. First, family readiness and care. Second, infrastructure. And third, our Sailor 2025 program and initiatives.

3.) Navy Updates Medical Waiver Process / 15 FEB 19
U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs
U.S. Navy surgeon general Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, on behalf of the Department of the Navy (DoN), instituted a new policy regarding the medical waiver process.

4.) Connectedness: Relationships Strengthen Resilience / 7 FEB 19
NavyNavStress
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Military.com, Jim Absher
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To sign up for the @USNPeople Weekly Wire, email usnpeople.fct@navy.mil, or find it online at www.navy.mil/cnp
THE PENTAGON – The Navy is pushing a series of education reforms to better train enlisted sailors and officers to face the increasing military capability posed by near-peer competitors and to fight complex, high-end wars.

Russia, China and non-state terrorist organizations can today more easily field advanced weapons systems. The result is that technological advantages enjoyed by U.S. forces in the battlespace is eroding, Under Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly told reporters earlier this week.

“The last remaining advantage we have is going to be our minds,” said Modly, who has made education a focus of his office. “So, we have to make sure we are getting the best top people and also that we’re educating them and training them to be very, very agile and adaptable so they can deal with uncertainty in a better way. And that’s what this is really about.”

Preparing sailors to think strategically is at the core of a dozen new initiatives announced by Modly on Tuesday. The actions are informed by the findings of a working group and are laid out in the newly released Education for Seapower study Modly, who ordered the study, is expected to include details of the Navy’s education reforms in his remarks Wednesday at WEST 2019, the annual conference co-hosted by U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA.

During the summer, Modly’s working group evaluated the current status of naval education and identified areas for improvement. The result is an action memo signed last week by Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer.

The Navy is creating an accredited Naval University System including a Naval Community College to enhance pathways to higher education among enlisted sailors. A chief learning officer position will develop the system and act as a champion for funding and partnerships with private sector higher educational institutions.

“The prioritization, as it should be over the last several years, has been around readiness, and education I think has not been considered a part of that readiness equation at a high enough level,” Modly said. “But I think that’s a little short-sighted, and I think that’s what the study found, is that it’s short-sighted because at some point if we don’t educate our people properly, it’s going to have a huge impact on readiness.”

A new three-star admiral position, the director of warfighting development (OPNAV N7), will be the “sole resource sponsor and strategic leader for naval education.” The person filling this role is expected work with the Marine Corps deputy commandant for combat development and integration to ensure training integrates Navy and Marine Corps strategy.

Among the reforms, the Navy is reevaluating the process for sending officers to earn advanced degrees. The Education for Seapower study found there’s not much of a correlation between an officer earning an advanced degree and an officer’s potential for promotion.

Now, the chief learning officer and director of warfighting development will work to better match officers identified for leadership roles with training aligned to their communities. All flag officers are going to be required to study strategy.

The chief learning officer role is expected to be filled by summer, and the outlines of the Naval University and Naval Community College will start taking shape soon after, with a report due by the end of 2019. Also, the boards of advisors for the Naval War College and Naval Postgraduate School are being streamlined into a single
Naval Educational Advisory Board, chaired by a retired four-star naval officer and including between 10 and 20 outside education, technology, business, law and finance experts.

The Education for Seapower study was the first clean-sheet review of Naval education to occur in a century, Modly said. The 1918 Knox King Pye report was the last time the service undertook such a large-scale look at how the Navy educated sailors.

“A lot of that sat on a shelf for a while,” Modly said. “But most of the officers who studied and trained for how we would fight in World War II were influenced by that study. A lot of the experimentation and the wargaming and the emphasis on strategic education was critical to developing those officers who led us through the Pacific War.”

2.) MCPON Testifies to Congress, Advocates for Quality of Life Resources / 8 FEB 19
Navy Live Blog, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith

The following is Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith’s oral testimony as delivered to the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies, during a hearing on Quality of Life in the Military on Feb. 7, 2019.

Good morning, Chairwoman Wasserman-Schultz, Ranking Member Carter and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you today on behalf of the enlisted men and women of the United States Navy, to discuss some of the most significant issues affecting the quality of life of our dedicated 324,000 enlisted Sailors, officers and their families. It is my honor to represent Sailors deployed around the world. They defend our American freedom, opportunity and families of all walks of life.

We appreciate the solemn privilege we have as stewards of the public trust, and shoulder the responsibility to carefully manage and wisely obligate the resources the American public entrusts to us as their stewards. The Navy the Nation Needs demands much from us in this era of great power competition. We must become stronger, faster and effectively build better teams to compete and win in the high-end war-fight at sea.

While we currently have the most capable ships and leading edge technology, our greatest edge in battle against any determined adversary will always be the asymmetric advantage that is provided by our people — the extraordinary talent and equity I have the honor of representing today. With that in mind, there are three specific areas I would like to discuss, that from my fleet engagements and numerous conversations with Sailors, I know are foremost on their minds.

First, family readiness and care. As the Chief of Naval Operations says, “a stronger family equals a stronger fleet.” One common thread I hear at every fleet visit among Sailors in all paygrades is accessibility to affordable and quality child care. A lot of people have tried to bin this and call it a women’s issue. It’s not. We have single fathers, single mothers and dual-working couples. I call this a family issue. Lack of available and affordable child care is a national issue for our generation. For our Navy, it is a critical readiness issue.

Second, infrastructure. As the Secretary of the Navy says, “infrastructure equals readiness.” Infrastructure directly supports ongoing missions and traditional roles of training and housing for Sailors, civilians and families. The condition of many Navy facilities impacts Sailors’ quality of life and their ability to train. Providing first-rate infrastructure contributes to a sharper focus on the mission.
And third, our Sailor 2025 program and initiatives. This is the most critical effort we've undertaken in the Navy since the turn of the 20th century to modernize and prioritize talent and innovation — to take our Navy beyond our competition and continue to be the best in the world. These initiatives effectively allow us to recruit, develop, manage, reward and retain talent in our force. Many administrative systems and programs were outdated, overly bureaucratic and riddled with administrative distractions that took time away from warfighters. Sailor 2025 efforts will return time and opportunity to units, allowing leaders to focus on tactical skills and warfighting readiness. Under Sailor 2025, we are empowering our Sailors.

It is crucial that we make the shift from bureaucratic roadblocks to innovative highways. Harvesting innovation means reimagining traditional workflows to maximize efficiency, leveraging ideas that will give us a competitive edge, and developing a more agile workforce empowered to achieve excellence in everything we do and prevail in the maritime battlespace when called upon.

Through sustained commitment and continued investment in removing distractions, and to improving training and quality of life, we will ensure our greatest advantage — our Sailors — are ready for the fight. We appreciate the continuing efforts of Congress to ensure we have all that we need to fight and win. We have and will continue to improve fleet readiness and quality of life for our Sailors and their families, while remaining responsible stewards of taxpayer resources entrusted to our care. Thank you for your steadfast support for the men and women of the United States Navy.

3.) Navy Updates Medical Waiver Process / 15 FEB 19
U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (NNS) (NNS) -- U.S. Navy surgeon general Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, on behalf of the Department of the Navy (DoN), instituted a new policy regarding the medical waiver process. The changes were officially signed Feb. 15, and impacts all applicants, with greater emphasis on enlisted to officer commissioning programs.

The decision to update this policy came about as a result of Senior Chief Petty Officer Shannon Kent's leadership and continued persistence to ensure the best processes are in place for the Navy. Her sacrifice and service to the Navy and our nation will never be forgotten.

This new policy, which was named in her honor, establishes a standardized waiver process that affords a pathway to appeal medical waiver recommendations. A mechanism is now in place for the service representatives to pursue a second medical waiver review on otherwise qualified applicants.

When a second medical waiver review is requested, a Navy medical professional with delegated authority will evaluate the applicant’s capability to enlist or commission despite the fact that a disqualifying condition may exist. Disqualifying medical conditions are defined in Department of Defense Instruction 6130.03, “Medical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction into the Military Services.”

This change standardizes the initial review process, ensuring all reviewers have access to the same information and are provided standardized training. This will result in decreased variability among medical reviewers and more robust reviews of all details associated with a case in pursuit of the most favorable determination.

Perhaps most importantly, the policy memo firmly states the surgeon general’s strong expectation, shared by all Navy leaders that the highest consideration should be afforded to those applicants currently serving in a deployable status.
Navy Medicine is a global health care network of 63,000 personnel which provides health care support to the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, their families, and veterans in high operational-tempo environments, at expeditionary medical facilities, medical treatment facilities, hospitals, clinics, hospital ships and research units around the world.

Get more information about the Navy from US Navy Facebook or twitter.

For more news from Navy Medicine, visit www.navy.mil/local/mednews/.

4.) Connectedness: Relationships Strengthen Resilience / 7 FEB 19
NavyNavStress
https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/02/07/connectedness-relationships-strengthen-resilience/

How connected are you? Many people value their self-reliance – the ability to solve and manage problems on their own. While self-reliance and grit are important qualities, relationships are one of the key principles of resilience.

What is Connectedness?

In its Suicide Prevention Strategic Direction published in 2011, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines connectedness as “the degree to which a person or group is socially close, interrelated, or shares resources with other persons or groups.” Connectedness can include relationships with friends, a spouse or other family members, as well as professional relationships and community ties. No matter what type of relationship is involved, the connection created can have significant positive effects on a person’s well-being. According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Network (2019), “positive and supportive social relationships and community connections can help buffer the effects of risk factors in people’s lives.”

Is There a Connectedness Crisis?

In today’s world, it appears like we are more connected than ever – at least with technology. Social media and mobile communication seem to make it easier to stay close to others. However, a 2018 survey by global health company Cigna of more than 20,000 U.S. adults showed increasing levels of loneliness despite the ability to stay in touch. Some of the key takeaways from the survey were:

- Nearly half of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone or left out.
- Two in five Americans sometimes or always feel that their relationships are not meaningful and that they are isolated from others.
- One in five people report they rarely or never feel close to people or feel like there are people they can talk to.
- Only around half of Americans have meaningful in-person social interactions on a daily basis, such as having an extended conversation with a friend or spending quality time with family.
- Generation Z is the loneliest generation and claims to be in worse health than older generations.

It’s important to find a balance between healthy use of social media, maintenance of in-person social connection and opportunities to create new relationships. Check out this article from the NavyNavStress blog for tips to help you reset your relationship with social media and your relationship with yourself.

Building Community Connectedness

In addition to unit cohesion and finding meaning in the mission, belonging to a social group can increase a person’s sense of personal value and feelings of connectedness with others. It also gives people access to a larger source of support. According to the CDC (2011), these effects indicate that people who belong to social
groups may be more capable of healthy coping in stressful situations. Additionally, group members can notice when someone is struggling with a problem and offer support to that individual. Stronger ties to community organizations may also benefit people by providing better access to formal helping resources outside of the group itself.

A social group may be a formal organization, like a faith-based study group or a petty officer association. They can also be informal, like coworkers who grab lunch together or gym buddies who work out together a few times a week. What’s most important is that the social group is positive and supportive for its members.

For Sailors and their families, two resources to find opportunities for social connection are the Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP) and the Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program. FFSPs support individual and family readiness through a full array of programs and resources which help Navy families to be resilient, well-informed and adaptable to the Navy environment. MWR offers diverse programs with something to interest almost everyone, and the offerings are great opportunities to meet others who share similar interests.

### Connecting with a Spouse or Significant Other

A romantic relationship is the closest form of social connectedness for many people. Conversely, the loss of a romantic partner can cause significant loneliness and stress. Navy life can be tough on romantic relationships. Unpredictable schedules, time apart and other factors can make it difficult to sustain and grow romantic partnerships. There are many resources to help, though. One of the most productive options to consider is to attend some form of counseling, and the Navy has several options for Sailors and their loved ones to reclaim their connection. Those resources include non-medical counseling through Military and Family Life Counseling, Navy Counseling, Advocacy and Prevention services at Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs); Navy chaplains and medical counseling available through a Military Treatment Facility.

### Building Connection 1 Small ACT at a Time

Caring is at the heart of connectedness. When interacting with others, remember that 1 Small ACT can make a difference. Like U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control on Facebook or follow @NavStress on Twitter for information from the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign. For additional resources, messages and materials, download the FY-19 1 Small ACT Toolkit.

### 5.) New High-Tech GI Bill Program Coming Soon / 13 FEB 19

Military.com, Jim Absher  

A new pilot program from the Department of Veterans Affairs aims to help student veterans enroll in non-traditional programs that teach high-tech skills.

Dubbed the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) program, it was announced Feb. 13 on the GI Bill website.

### What Is VET TEC?

The VET TEC program, set to start in April, focuses on high-tech skills that are in demand in today's workplace, the VA says.
According to the VA, VET TEC will pay you a housing allowance and take care of tuition costs just like the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The difference is that you have to take classes in one of five areas:

1. Information science
2. Computer programming
3. Data processing
4. Media applications
5. Computer software

The primary difference between this program and the Post-9/11 GI Bill is that the classes are much shorter than regular college or vocational training, sometimes requiring only months or weeks to gain certification.

**Who Is Eligible for VET TEC?**

Anyone currently eligible to use their GI Bill -- Montgomery or Post-9/11 -- is qualified for the program as long as they haven't passed the time limit to use their benefits and have at least one day of benefits remaining.

Unlike most GI Bill programs, any training received as part of VET TEC will not decrease your GI Bill entitlement in any way. It is essentially free money.

**How Does VET TEC Work?**

VET TEC is designed to move veterans into the job force faster than a traditional college program. Acquiring essential skills in such a short time gives you the opportunity to advance your career sooner rather than later.

Many of the "coding boot camps" and other high-tech training will be included in this new program.

To combat fraud, waste and abuse, the VA will pay the training provider 25 percent of the course cost when you enroll. Another 25 percent will be paid when you complete the program. The remaining 50 percent of the cost of training will be paid to the provider only when you "secure meaningful employment in the field of study that you enrolled in."

According to the VA, training providers can be listed as a "preferred provider" if they agree to return all money they got from the VA if you don't find meaningful employment within 180 days.

**How to Sign Up for VET TEC**

The program has just been announced and, according to the VA, an online application will be available soon. The GI Bill website will be updated with an application, as well as a listing of all approved places you can use the program.

Just like any other program, applying doesn't mean you will be accepted. Schools may have certain qualifications or testing requirements you must meet before you can enroll.

**Keep Up with Your Education Benefits**

Whether you need a guide on how to use your GI Bill, want to take advantage of tuition assistance and scholarships, or get the lowdown on education benefits available for your family, Military.com can help. Sign up for a free Military.com membership to have education tips and benefits updates delivered directly to your inbox.
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For more information, affecting Sailors and their families follow @USNPeople on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.