



# Facts and Questions

## *Will NECA be granting my degree or certificate?*

Your degree or certificate will be granted by the institution in which you are enrolled. From the time that you apply for admission until you graduate, you will be a student at the institution.

## *How do I apply?*

Use the link from the NECA College Degree Program/EARN website for the institution in which you are interested. If you need help, contact the institution directly or reach out to us at [Earn@necanet.org](mailto:Earn@necanet.org)

## *Do I need my supervisor or chapter's approval to apply to one of the partner institutions?*

You don't need your supervisor or chapter's approval to apply to the institutions that are part of the NECA EARN. If your employer offers incentives such as tuition remission, a book allowance, or similar benefits, you need to check with them to see if you are eligible for the incentives. Your HR Department is usually a good place to start!

## *Does NECA offer scholarships?*

At this time, NECA doesn't offer any scholarships, but many of the partner institutions do! Click on the link for the institution in which you are interested and you will find information on any scholarships that are available. Many of the institutions offer other types of financial incentives such as waiver of in-state tuition and reduced tuition rates. Additionally, your NECA Chapter may have scholarships available.

## *Is financial aid available?*

In most cases, Federal financial aid is available in the form of student loans and grants for degree completion. Certificates are generally not covered by Federal financial aid as they do not lead to degrees.

Click the link for the institution in which you are interested and you will find a link that provides information on financial aid including how to apply for financial aid for the institution. In most cases, you will begin by completing the FAFSA Form. Most institutions encourage all students to complete the FAFSA, even if they don't need financial assistance at the present time.

### *When do classes begin?*

One of the benefits of using NECA EARN is access to the variety of institutions that are affiliated with the program. Since most of the programs are offered online to adult learners, there are a variety of schedules, entry points, and options. Some institutions have programs with open admission where a student can start at any time and can work at his or her own pace. These are sometimes known as “Flex Programs.” Others have programs that follow more traditional schedules with entry points in the Fall, Spring, and Summer. Click on the link for the institution in which you are interested and you can find information on admission and application deadlines, course schedules, and other related information.

### *Will my employer know if I take classes?*

Your employer does not have to know that you are interested in taking classes, but if you want to be able to take advantage of the benefits and incentives offered by institutional partners, you will need to provide confirmation of employment by a NECA-member company. In some instances, you will be required to present a letter or other document from your HR Department.

### *Do I have to share my grades or records with my employer?*

At the point that you are admitted to one of the partner institutions, you are entitled to all rights afforded to all students through FERPA, the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

FERPA prohibits the institution from sharing your grades or personal records with anyone unless you give them permission to do so. Keep in mind that if your employer is providing incentives to you such as tuition remission, leave-time for classes, or other benefits related to your education, they may require that you share grade reports and other information with them. Be sure to check with your employer to determine what they require.

### *How do I take classes?*

Since students who enter programs through NECA EARN are working adults, most of the programs offered are taken as an online student, including all of the programs in our initial offering.

### *What types of programs are offered?*

To provide the most flexible options our initial offerings are certificate programs, some of which grant college credits, but many types of programs will be offered as a part of NECA EARN. This will include degree programs are offered at the associate, bachelors, masters, and graduate levels.

### *What types of majors and certificate programs are offered?*

Due to the varying roles that employees of NECA member companies hold within their organizations, and the variety of offerings our partner institutions we have curated a collection of a variety of offerings. If there is a program area that you're interested in but don't see yet reach out to [earn@necanet.org](mailto:earn@necanet.org).

### *What is the difference between a degree program and a certificate program?*

Degree programs lead to one of several types of degrees. These include:

- **Associate's Degree:** Often referred to as a two-year degree; generally 60 semester hours; Consists of core academic classes and some lower-level courses related to the major; May give substantial credit for apprenticeship completion.
- **Bachelor's Degree:** Often referred to as a four-year degree; generally 120 hours; Includes courses typical of an associate's degree plus upper-level or major classes. This is the most common degree at most universities. You can start most bachelor's degrees without having completed an associate's degree.
- **Graduate Degree:** Includes master's degrees and doctoral degrees. Hours vary greatly, but a typical master's degree requires 30-36 hours and a doctoral degree requires approximately 90-120 hours including a dissertation. You must have an approved bachelor's degree before you can be admitted to a graduate degree.

**Certificate programs** do not lead to a degree, but many provide a certificate issued by the institution or an outside agency. The number of courses varies, but two to four classes are common. Certificate programs are generally very focused on a specific topic or field. Some programs utilize "for-credit" courses while others are strictly for continuing education credits. Frequently, students are given options to complete the class for credit or not for credit, based on their individual preferences. Courses taken for college credit sometimes can be used to later pursue a degree and they may be transferable to other institutions.

### *How do I decide which college and program is best for me?*

There are many factors that go into selecting an educational institution and deciding which program is best for you. Some of the things to consider are:

- Do you want to pursue a degree, a certificate program, or just a class or two?
- Why are you interested in beginning a program? Is it for career advancement or personal growth?
- Which major or certificate program will help you meet your personal and career-related goals?
- Do you need financial aid? Can you afford the tuition and fees at the institution?
- What type of course schedule works best for you? Traditional Semester (approximately 15 weeks), Compressed Schedule (7-8 weeks with more time per week), or Flex Schedule (Open entry, self-paced)
- Do you want a public institution or a private not-for-profit institution?
- What previous college credits, work experiences, and professional certifications do you currently possess? Many institutions and programs offer credit based on what you bring with you upon admission.
- What will your employer support with incentives? You may want to begin with a conversation with your supervisor or HR Department.
- Do your homework! Spend time reflecting on what you and your employer value related to continuous improvement and professional development. Talk to others who have gone through the same process. Research each of the partner institutions to see what they offer through this program and on their institutional websites.
- Contact us at [EARN@necanet.org](mailto:EARN@necanet.org) if you need help making a decision or understanding the process!

*How will this impact my work and family life?*

That's the million dollar question! Taking courses and pursuing degrees and certificates requires a substantial commitment. It is important to consider the time requirements necessary to be successful in the online classroom. Since much of the coursework is done independently, a student must be self-directed and quite often must rearrange schedules and prioritize events and responsibilities. Because of our unique partnerships with adult student-friendly institutions, you may have an easier time working your classwork into your work and family life. Many adult learners believe that the time and effort given while they are engaged in coursework is repaid many times over through enhancements to their personal and professional lives. All of our institutional partners offer a "concierge-type" service to assist our NECA stakeholders navigate the process of beginning their educational experiences. It isn't easy, but it certainly can be rewarding! Just make sure that you are ready and committed before enrolling into a program. You can always reach out to us or your selected institution if things get too overwhelming.

*Are the institutions and programs listed on the NECA EARN webpage the only choices that are available to me?*

The NECA EARN staff is working constantly to identify new institutions and programs that will make valuable additions to our list of programs. We have carefully vetted our partner institutions and worked with them to ensure that the programs offered are high-quality, relevant, and appropriate for our NECA stakeholders. As new programs and institutions are identified, they will be added to the website. Feel free to contact us at [EARN@necanet.org](mailto:EARN@necanet.org) to discuss any particular needs that you may have and to share ideas for new programs and institutional partners.