

## Soldiers get crash course in business

Soldiers abroad will have the opportunity to take Marshall School of Business classes online.

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Members of the U.S. Armed Forces will now have the opportunity to become chartered financial analysts while serving in the military, thanks to an innovative program offered by the USC Marshall School of Business and the Chartered Financial Analyst Society of Los Angeles.

While the two organizations began streaming online lectures in January 2006 for their CFA Review Program, designed to help individuals earn their CFA certification, they only recently began to think of extending the program to military servicemen. Being CFA certified is an internationally recognized designation that measures the abilities of financial analysts.

"Often we don't appreciate what they're going through, particularly active servicemen," said Larry Harris, director of the Center for Investment Studies at Marshall and co-director of the CFA Review Program. "For people serving abroad or on a ship board or something like that, a lot of them are going to get out of the service at some point ... We figured we could provide them a service at no cost to us."

The program will allow on-duty members of the military to access the online media from anywhere in the world, preparing them to take the CFA exams. The CFA designation is one of the most prestigious designations in the financial world.

"Anybody who wants to be a serious player in investment management or financial analysis or corporate finance — you've got to have a CFA these days," Harris said.

CFALA hopes the program will help servicemen interested in investment careers ease the transition to civilian life. Harris added that with the economy struggling, he expects a huge premium on financial analysts as the current on-duty servicemen are getting out of the military.

And less than two weeks after the program was announced, five servicemen have enrolled in the online courses.

One of those servicemen is Billy Griffin, who is currently serving with the Navy in San Diego. Griffin said that he was interested in earning either his MBA or CFA, but chose to pursue the CFA because he could study while he was with the Navy. After researching different options, he found that the program offered by USC and CFALA was the best option.

"I was interested because it was free for the military," Griffin said. "But then after I read about it, it seems like a really beneficial program and it should be really helpful through the whole review process."

Griffin, who graduated in May from the U.S. Naval Academy as a history major, is six months into his five-year commitment with the military. His goal, once his service is over, is to run his own firm.

Griffin was surprised to hear that the program already had five participants.

"I was shocked because most people haven't even heard of the CFA so I was really surprised that there were other military members who would be doing the same thing," Griffin said.

USC and CFALA have not done any outreach to get participants involved so far, but the program was covered by Stars and Stripes, a daily newspaper published for military members.

Although Griffin is stationed on a ship and will be gone for parts of the spring, he does not anticipate any problems accessing the classes. There was, however, one serviceman interested in the program who will not be able to participate because the Internet on his ship will not accommodate streaming media.

The free classes are also being extended to coalition servicemen in Afghanistan and Iraq. Harris is confident that the CFA Review Program will be helpful to servicemen, as it has been to traditional students.

"We've been doing this for an awful long time, and a lot of Marshall students and other university students have attended the program as a review and that's been great for them and great for the school," Harris said. "We're providing a lot of service, doesn't cost us anything, it's good for the profession — even if somebody studies for this exam and they don't pass, they become more financially literate. Everybody wins."

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