

Amazon teams with university to train military employees for new roles

August 26 2020, by Benjamin Romano



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Amazon has developed an online certification program with City University of Seattle to train its military employees and their families for higher-paying jobs in the company.

The effort is an outgrowth of an earlier partnership between the mega-

retailer and the Seattle-based private nonprofit university, which provides online degree programs to some 7,000 students enrolled around the world. It reflects Amazon's emphasis on "upskilling" its workers, and specifically the thousands of [military veterans](#) and their spouses working for the company, said Charles Stevens, senior manager of Amazon global military affairs.

The courses, in topics such as database technologies, business analytics and product management, can stand alone or be incorporated into undergraduate or graduate degrees.

They fit into a broader trend - which has accelerated with the pandemic and ensuing labor market disruption - toward highly focused [training programs](#) that can lead directly to new jobs or promotions, said Chris Graham, president of Workforce Education Solutions, part of the National University System, which City University is a part of.

"What we're seeing in the last six months is a dramatically increased demand for training and development ... outside of the degree programs," Graham said. For example, "event planners who are now answering telephones (at health care systems) need training on crisis communications and emergency management."

Amazon military [veteran](#) employees working in the company's fulfillment centers, for example, can take the [online courses](#) - which have no fixed start times in order to fit around a full-time work schedule - to prepare them for current and future needs in the company, which continues to have tens of thousands of job openings.

"It's really about being able to open some of those ... technical-type roles to our population," Stevens said.

The six courses that make up the City University [program](#) cost \$1,834

each, but Amazon employees get a discount of 25% and the courses can be paid for with veterans benefits.

Amazon defines its military community as veterans, people transitioning from active duty to civilian life and their families. It includes both the U.S. military and, as a global company, the militaries of other nations, and the certificate program is open to all of them, Stevens said.

In 2016, Amazon pledged to hire 25,000 veterans and military spouses and train 10,000 others in cloud-computing technologies over five years. Stevens couldn't give a definitive number of military employees at Amazon, because the total fluctuates, but said the company's goal is to exceed that 2016 pledge.

On Veterans Day in 2018, Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos unveiled the 40th cargo jet in Amazon Air's fleet, named "Valor" to honor "the thousands of Amazonian veterans and military spouses delivering for our customers every day," he said in a tweet at the time.

City University President Randy Frisch said about a quarter of the student population is either active duty military or veterans transitioning to new careers. "We have a skill at taking military training, military experience, and packaging that prior learning into our programs, so that we don't force the very experienced, responsible men and women of the military to relearn or sit through classes where they have done that, been there," he said.

This program is separate from a broader effort Amazon announced in 2019 to "upskill" 100,000 workers.

Amazon previously worked with City University on the Apprenti program, begun in 2017 under the auspices of the Washington Technology Industry Association, to train newcomers to the tech

industry and place them in paid apprenticeships. Frisch said some 200 people, primarily military men and women, have found apprenticeships at Amazon through that program.

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Citation: Amazon teams with university to train military employees for new roles (2020, August 26) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-08-amazon-teams-university-military-employees.html>

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