

A National Best Practice Connecting Veterans with Training and Jobs

CLASSROOM AND HANDS-ON TRAINING IN THE WELDING AND PIPING INDUSTRY

Transitioning from active duty to civilian life can amplify service members' concerns about their next career opportunity. Remarkably, the United

Association Veterans In Piping (VIP) Program is one of few training programs that guarantees veterans employment upon successful completion. This training opportunity is sponsored by the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry (UA), which represents approximately 340,000 plumbers, pipefitters, sprinkler fitters, service technicians and welders in local unions across North America.

UNITED
ASSOCIATION
VETERANS IN
PIPING (VIP)
PROGRAM

uavip.org



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Offers free training to service members
- No previous welding or pipe fitting experience required
- Allows veterans to choose their post-service apprenticeship locality among 250 local unions
- Guaranteed employment after successful completion of training and apprenticeship programs

Originating in 2008 as a civilian program in the state of Washington, the United Association VIP Program is now a national skills-trade program designed for veterans who are transitioning within the next six to eight months. Mandated by the United States Department of Defense, the program offers 18 weeks of free classroom and hands-on training in the welding and piping industry to service members with no previous welding or pipe fitting experience. Once they have completed the program, veterans enter into apprenticeship programs with UA-affiliated employers. Apprenticeships are five years long, and VIP graduates typically gain a year of credit for their participation in VIP. Placements are also tailored to the veteran's preferences. Veterans can identify the location where they would like to live, and they are matched with a local union in the closest available proximity to their selection. Thus, this program offers veterans the opportunity to return to their hometowns or start a new life in a new location. These apprenticeship placements are also pipelines to permanent employment with family-sustaining wages and benefits. Program graduates have continued their careers in natural gas, heating and air conditioning, shipyard work, medical, and public health safety. As of September 2018, the VIP Program had nine

distinct programs on seven installations. Six programs have a welding focus, two have a Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration focus, and one has a sprinkler fitting and fire suppression focus.

In 2014, Camp Lejeune began hosting the VIP Program, and continues to offer the program three times a year. Program officials host an information session on the third Thursday of each month to inform transitioning veterans about the opportunity and to answer questions. Admission into the program is highly competitive, and a selection panel reviews applications. As of September 2018, Camp Lejeune's VIP Program had capacity for the top 16 applicants per course, but they receive 40+ applicants per session. Officials affirm that there is a "100% placement rate of those who want to be placed." In other words, there is a job waiting for enrollees upon completion because of partnerships with local unions. The only reasons a student would not be placed in a job are if they decide to reenlist or choose a different career path.

PARTNERSHIPS

The program is a partnership between the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States & Canada (UA), military bases, and employers.

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PROGRAM FUNDING

The program is fully funded by the UA International Training Fund, which is a Taft-Hartley Trust that is administered by the UA and contractor partners. The investment is about \$15,000 per student or over \$10 million nationwide. In North Carolina alone, the union has invested over \$1.5 million in training.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Nationally, the VIP Program has graduated over 1,900 students.
- Since inception, Camp Lejeune has graduated 150 VIP Program students.
- Over 40 VIP graduates have begun their careers in North Carolina.
- On average, a VIP graduate earns approximately \$16- \$20 per hour as an apprentice, which is about 50-60% of a seasoned professional's salary in the welding and piping industry.
- During their five-year apprenticeship, VIP graduates earn compensation raises as they meet benchmarks and grow their proficiency.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Brought to you by the NCWorks Commission, the Spotlight on Local Workforce Innovations showcases local innovations in collaborative, employer-led workforce development partnerships across our state. The series will highlight promising practices that can be replicated across the state.

The NCWorks Commission is the state's Workforce Development Board. Led by a private sector chair, the 33-member, Governor-appointed commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders. The commission's mission is to ensure North Carolina has an innovative, effective workforce development system that meets the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.