

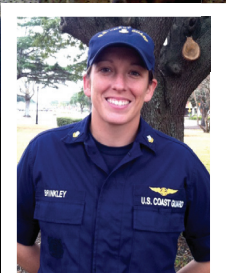
TENACIOUS TECH

Coast Guard marine science technician applies military discipline to earn a college degree.

COURTESY OF OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

FUN FACTS

Hobbies? Softball, painting, kayaking, backpacking
 What do you do to relax? Paint
 Fondest memory of the military? When I worked on HH-65s as an avionics electrical technician, pulling two guys off of a disabled sailboat in 30-foot seas, 80 miles off the coast of northern California.



“I’D LIKE A CAREER RELATING TO SUSTAINABILITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND I’M PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN FRESH WATER CONSERVATION.”



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY ECAMPUS

Location(s): Corvallis, Ore., and online
 Website: ecampus.oregonstate.edu
 Recruiting contact name: Gus Bedwell
 E-mail: gus.bedwell@oregonstate.edu
 Admissions phone number: 800-291-4192
 Per-credit tuition: \$260 undergrad
 \$496 graduate (see website for specifics)

Application fee:

- \$50 undergraduate
- \$60 graduate

Degree programs:

More than 30 undergraduate and graduate programs



For the Military

- VA Counselor
- Yellow Ribbon Program participant
- Credit for military training and service
- Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges consortium member
- Full-time veterans counselors
- Veterans Club
- Veteran Certifying Officials

When you lead a busy life and have the amount of ambition **Kate Brinkley** does, order and prioritization rule the day. Your life becomes a giant Post-it note, with progress measured by your ability to conquer one task and move to the next.

Military personnel are no strangers to structure, but Brinkley – a member of the **U.S. Coast Guard** – took it to another level when she enrolled in online courses with Oregon State University Ecampus in 2006.

She had no choice, really. With a demanding job as a marine science technician and nearly a full load of classes every term, there

would be no compromises, no excuses and no slowing down.

She lived full tilt, full time. And she flourished. “I basically became a compulsive list-maker. I made lists for each week that included everything I knew I had to get done for both work and school, with due dates,” says Brinkley, a petty officer second class. “Even little trivial things made the list, so when they were completed I could cross them off.”

The lists varied from week to week, but her big-picture outline probably looked something like this: ▶

“I’M HOPING THAT THIS DEGREE, COMBINED WITH A CAREER THAT DEALS LARGELY WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, WILL GIVE ME A COMPETITIVE STANDING WHEN PURSUING A SECOND CAREER.”



- ▶ • Serve my country
- Learn how to impact the world
- Graduate magna cum laude
- Position myself for a successful career

Check, check, check and check.

Brinkley, 28, was a natural fit for Oregon State’s environmental sciences online program despite being stationed across the country in South Carolina. She had ample experience working on environmental protection issues, and OSU is regarded as a national leader in areas related to natural resources.

The pairing was perfect. A determined Brinkley graduated with a 3.82 GPA in June 2012, and she traveled 2,500 miles to accept her diploma in person with the rest of OSU’s Class of 2012.

“Kate’s training in the Coast Guard gave her the discipline and created the successful

foundation for her course work, because you have to have diligence and set a high standard for yourself if you want to succeed,” says her Ecampus adviser, Dawn Marie Gaid. “All of the things that the military expects of its people, you see that reflected in her studies.”

Brinkley had no previous college experience when she enrolled with Ecampus, but she recognized the need to earn a college degree. Online education is popular among military members, particularly because of the schedule flexibility it provides and the ability to study from anywhere.

Brinkley, though, was looking for flexibility and then some. She found it all in Ecampus, which is routinely ranked among the nation’s best providers of online education and was named to the Military Friendly Schools® list each of the last three years.

“I had never taken any classes online before, and I didn’t really know what to expect,” says Brinkley, who transferred in 45 military credits to OSU. “I knew that there are a lot of online degree programs available, some of which are tailored specifically to military students, and I wanted to be sure my program was based on quality of education more than it was based on convenience.”

The knowledge she gained in the environmental sciences program helped her to position herself nicely as she looks ahead. Her Coast Guard work includes oil pollution response in and around U.S. navigable waterways, as well as inspection of foreign freight vessels to ensure compliance with federal and international pollution prevention regulations.

Those hands-on experiences were a nice complement to her studies, which often dealt with similar conservation issues. Now she can use her degree to move up the ladder within the Coast Guard – or branch out into something else entirely.

“I’m hoping that this degree, combined with a career that deals largely with environmental protection, will give me a competitive standing when pursuing a second career,” she says. “I’d like a career relating to sustainability of natural resources, and I’m particularly interested in fresh water conservation.”

Gaid, the environmental sciences adviser, says military students are in an ideal position to follow Brinkley’s lead and transfer their work-related skills and knowledge into a college education. The military environment provides natural opportunities for internships, Gaid says, as well as access to mentors who are willing to help students make course selections and give career advice.

“A student already in those environments are in a much more advantageous position to succeed than someone who isn’t in the military and might just go off on their own to start a new career,” Gaid said. “It takes a lot of dedication and self-discipline, but Kate is proof that it can be done. She never missed a beat.”