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MILLIONS OPT FOR ONLINE COURSES THAT SUIT THEIR LIFESTYLE

**FOR CAPT. GAVIN** Reed, the decision to seek an online graduate degree stemmed from a hectic schedule at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego.

"I needed something that would cater to the military existence," says Reed, 27. The criminal justice program at Arizona State University Online proved to be the right fit. Reed plans to receive his degree in 2015.

Online education has been on the rise for the past decade. More than 6.7 million students (graduate and undergrad) took at least one online course during fall 2011, an increase of 570,000 students over the previous year, according to a survey by the Babson Survey Research Group. The survey also found that 32

percent of higher education students now take at least one course online.

Online graduate programs are popular in the fields of business, engineering, computer information technology and education. But other disciplines are getting into the act—even mortuary science has virtual graduate programs available, says **Vicky Phillips**, founder of GetEducated.com, an information clearinghouse for online education.

The trend is being driven by older students, many in their 30s, who are looking for a mid-career credential boost, Phillips says. "Most people don't live within driving distance of a college," she says. "They work; they have childcare issues."

BY CHRIS GRAY FAUST

## FAST FACTS

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MILLION

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### Popular Fields for Online Programs

Business  
Computer Information Technology  
Education  
Engineering

SOURCE: BABSON SURVEY RESEARCH GROUP