

AFTER ACTION REPORT		VETERANS IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CREDENTIAL MSPM • Master of Science in Project Management	US SALARY Not published for degrees	REPORTED AUG 18, 2026
REPORTING Dr. Michael J. Shick, MSPM • Air Force • Episode 001		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY • EPISODE 001

Michael Shick spent 21 years in the Air Force running projects nobody called projects. He chose a project management master's over an MBA on one rule, that if he only had to do it once it had to make him useful, took it at George Washington while still serving, and retired out of the Pentagon into a professorship at the university where the PMP was developed.

A project management master's is the long route: two years and tuition against a few weeks and an exam fee. For a veteran with entitlement left, the arithmetic is not what the sticker price suggests.

CONDITIONS • CHANGED AUG 01, 2026 The Post-9/11 ceiling for private schools rose to \$30,908.34 on August 1, 2026. After Rudisill and Perkins some veterans reach 48 months rather than 36, but the last 12 are Montgomery, not Chapter 33.
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1 TASK AND STANDARD

TASK: qualify for, enroll in and complete the MSPM. STANDARD: admission, then 30 graduate credits.	
Accredited bachelor's degree	Required, in any subject
GRE, GMAT, or project management experience	None required
Application package	Transcripts, résumé, 500 words, one reference
GW's requirements. Programs differ sharply on experience, so check yours. A GAC-accredited postgraduate degree drops PMI's PMP requirement from 36 months to 24.	

2 ASSESSMENT – WHAT COUNTS FROM YOUR SERVICE

Admission doesn't ask what you did in the service. What your service buys is the funding, and at a private school your benefit percentage decides whether that funding covers the bill.	
☐ Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement	
☐ Yellow Ribbon, where the school offers it	
☐ In-state tuition at a public school	
☐ Tuition assistance, while you're still serving	
Doesn't count: A Joint Services Transcript for graduate credit, tuition assistance after you separate, and out-of-state tuition because you're a veteran.	

3 RESOURCES AND RETURN

Tuition	\$2,076 a credit • \$62,280 for 30 (GW)
GI Bill ceiling	\$30,908.34 a year, plus Yellow Ribbon
PMP experience gate	24 months instead of 36 (GAC)
Renewal	No PDUs, no renewal fee

PMI's PMP Examination Content Outline, July 2026. The salary premium published for the PMP has no equivalent for a degree.

SUSTAIN

- ❑ Count your months, then stop worrying about them. Entitlement is charged only while you're enrolled, so a 30-credit master's spends about 16 of 36.
- ❑ The cliff is your benefit level, not the ceiling. Yellow Ribbon needs the full 100%, and below it you get a proportional payment and no match at all.
- ❑ Get Yellow Ribbon in writing before any deposit, including the cap on how many students receive it. GW publishes no cap, which means asking.
- ❑ A public school in your own state ends the argument. Chapter 33 pays net in-state tuition and fees in full, so the ceiling never comes into it.
- ❑ Still serving is stronger: tuition assistance runs at \$250 a semester hour and \$4,500 a fiscal year, and every credit it covers is entitlement you keep.

IMPROVE

- ❑ *Settle the degree question before you get out. The Air Force was structured so a master's helped you get promoted, and there's a lot of opportunity to earn one while you're in. It doesn't follow you out the door.*
- ❑ *Don't take the degree that's easiest to get. I only wanted to do it once, so it had to be the one that made me useful. The MBA was the default and I went looking for something specific.*
- ❑ *Look at what the program expects of you. Some won't admit you until you've been a project manager first, others take you with none. Different products at a similar price.*
- ❑ *Don't wait until you're six months out and hope SkillBridge fixes it. You can study and deliver value in your unit at the same time.*
- ❑ *Go for the framework, not the paper. I had years of project management experience and hadn't formalized any of it. The degree let me look at risk quantitatively instead of by instinct.*

5 REMARKS — REPORTING INDIVIDUAL

Dr. Michael J. Shick, episode 001

- *If I've got to do it, I only want to do it once, so it had better be the thing that makes me useful. I looked hard at an MBA. What kept nagging was a simpler question: is there a formal way to deliver value against an objective?*
- *I already had a few years of project management experience. I just hadn't formalized any of it. The degree isn't what taught me projects existed. It's what gave me a framework for what I'd been doing all along.*
- *A certification has you memorizing the menu of things you can do. You never have to perform them to pass. A degree makes you actually do them, where somebody marks whether you did. That's the honest argument for the longer route.*
- *Master's programs are not one thing. They run from what I'd call a PMP on steroids to programs that won't admit you until you've been a project manager first. Work out which one you're buying.*
- *The transformative part is the room. Experienced project managers from across industries working out what best practice actually is, rather than what any one body says it is. No exam gives you that.*

NEXT STEP

Read the full MSPM route, kept current

Eligibility, the path, cost, and what a US veteran should know about funding it.

FULL ROUTE, KEPT CURRENT

<https://veteransinprojectmanagement.com/certifications/mspm/training-guide/>

EPISODE, TRANSCRIPT AND LINKS

<https://veteransinprojectmanagement.com/podcasts/vipm/001-michael-shick/>

Reported August 18, 2026 with episode 001, and unchanged since. Requirements were last checked August 22, 2026 and they do move: the full route above is maintained, this report is not. This is a guide, not advice, it isn't an official or government document, and the universities that award it had no part in it and did not endorse it. Where a training provider or a school is named, assume we may have a commercial interest in it.