

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC)

Did you know that SOC is a government contract designed to help Service members get a college education? SOC was created to provide educational opportunities to Service members who, because they moved from place to place, had trouble completing college degrees. SOC functions in cooperation with 15 higher education associations, the Department of Defense (DoD), and Active and Reserve Components of the military Services. The contract is managed for DoD by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES).

The SOC Consortium consists of more than 1,900 accredited institutions. SOC Consortium members enroll hundreds of thousands of Service members, their family members, and veterans annually in associate, bachelor's, and graduate-level degree programs. These are located on school campuses, military installations, armories within the United States and overseas, and through distance learning. Each SOC Consortium member designates an Institutional Representative, a Counselor, and a VA Program Administrator to assist Service members at his or her institution.

SOC Degree Network System (DNS)

The SOC DNS is a subset of the SOC Consortium. Made up of SOCAD (SOC Army Degrees), SOCNAV (SOC Navy Degrees), SOCMAR (SOC Marine Corps Degrees), and SOCCOAST (SOC Coast Guard Degrees), colleges and universities selected by the Services help Service members and their adult family members complete associate and bachelor's degrees by

adopting policies that in some aspects exceed those of the larger SOC Consortium.

Specific information about the SOC Degree Network System may be found on the SOCAD, SOCNAV, SOCMAR, and SOCCOAST Web pages on the SOC Web site.

SOC workshops are free!

One of SOC's outreach functions includes college workshops. Workshops are recommended for institutional representatives and military educators working directly with Service members. If you are interested in more information about these workshops, go to www.soc.aascu.org/socgen/Workshops.html.

College outreach programs improve education opportunities for Service members through academic credit for non-traditional learning; tuition reductions/discounts/incentives; and streamlining administrative procedures. In addition, by recruiting in the military market, colleges have an opportunity to promote their academic programs and increase their enrollments and revenues. Below are upcoming SOC workshop venues:

Virginia Beach, Va.	Consortium & DNS	May 22-23
Pittsburgh, Pa.		Aug. (TBD)
Washington, D.C.	Consortium	Oct. 24
Washington, D.C.	DNS	Oct. 25

SOC's Military Student Bill of Rights, which highlights 10 basic rights to fair marketing and student services for military students attending SOC institutions, and the Standards of Good Practice were both created in response to SOC constituent concerns about aggressive marketing, hidden fees and costs, unclear policies and procedures, and insufficient or incomplete student services assistance. Both documents outline acceptable standards for SOC Consortium members.

To learn more about SOC's programs, publications, and services, and for general information, go to www.soc.aascu.org/.

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Test preparation available to Service members

How can Service members prepare to take an exam? The first and best available resource for Service members is their education counselor or academic advisor, who can identify exams that apply towards their degree plan of study. Counselors assist with strategies to reduce the amount of college credits needed to achieve an education goal and transfer to colleges and universities, and should always be the first stop for education advice and guidance. Whether the question is how to use credit by exam, how to prepare for an exam, or advisement on taking a college level course, counselors are the subject matter experts regarding assisting Service members in planning, preparing and achieving their education goals.

Credit by exam

Credit by exam is intended to measure a student's academic skill at the college level. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and DSST exams give military students the chance to earn college-level credits for previously learned knowledge, at no cost for the first attempt. Proper exam preparation is vital to successful testing, increasing a student's chance to earn college credits in lieu of taking a college course. If a Service member does not pass an exam, he or she will be responsible for any retesting costs. Therefore, being prepared initially is important, saving both time and money as a result of a successful exam.

OASC and DoD MWR Library

At the Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) Web site students can build up their math and writing skills in order to excel in their jobs, pass exams, advance their careers or continue their education. Active duty Service members can access OASC via their Service portals (AKO, NKO, AF-Portal, Coast Guard).

The DoD MWR Library (www.nelnetsolutions.com/dod) provides study guides, printable sample tests, resources, articles, and related links for various examinations, as well as links to OASC.

Tutor.com

A free online tutor service available for active military and their family members is located at www.tutor.com/military for tutoring in specific subject areas.

Study guides

Other options to consider for self-paced preparation include Web sites offering free CLEP and DSST exam study guides: <http://clep.collegeboard.org/study-resources> and <http://getcollegecredit.com>. **WARNING:** Before purchasing any study materials, students are strongly recommended to check out their on-base education center and/or local library, as these locations have access to a variety of FREE study materials in various media formats.

Test takers can also check with local college or university testing offices for study material availability. Test Control Officers (TCOs) can access the DANTES TCO Portal and download study guides and fact sheets for exams such as CLEP and DSST. The only official test preparation that DANTES sponsors is the Official GED Practice Test.

Students and academic advisors can visit the DANTES Web site for more information on resources for Service members and their families to help them plan, prepare and achieve their education goals. To learn more about DANTES sponsored examination programs, test preparation resources, and how to locate an education center for assistance with educational goals, go to www.dantes.doded.mil and select the Examinations and Resource links on the left.

Other VoEd news in the world...

Continuing education: Chief Master Sgt. Cynthia Solomito working on dual master's degree
www.dvidshub.net/news/86117/continuing-education-chief-master-sgt-cynthia-solomito-working-dual-masters-degree

Navy pro: college program offers road to success
www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=66098

Educators discuss future of Army education
www.dvidshub.net/news/86338/educators-discuss-future-army-education

Register for CLEP professional development webinars

The College Board CLEP program has launched a series of free professional development webinars designed to meet the needs of faculty and testing professionals, conducted once a month by a CLEP staff member. As part of the CLEP professional development Web series, College Board recently launched a new session, “CLEP for Military Members and Veterans,” designed to reach veteran affair officers, advisors, and test center administrators. This session highlights the benefits with regard to CLEP exams available to active duty Service members, veterans, and eligible spouses as well as offering a platform where an exchange of best practices can take place.

In addition to the above webinar, the CLEP program also hosts seven other one hour sessions: “CLEP Overview”; “Adopting CLEP on Your Campus”; “Advising Students about CLEP”; “Test Center Operations”; “CLEP College Composition Exams”; “CLEP Math and Science Exams”; and “CLEP for Faculty”. These sessions are scheduled through June 2012 and will resume in the fall of 2012.

College Board welcomes suggestions for information to include in future sessions which you have found from your experience in military education to be beneficial.

To register or for more information, go to <http://clep.collegeboard.org/professional>.

TCO customer support for verifying eligibility to test

Many Test Control Officers (TCOs) have asked the question, “Why can’t my NTC Administrator have access to the TCO Portal to verify if Service members have retested?” In accordance with the DANTES Examination Program Handbook (DEPH) II-4-10, TCOs should determine an examinee’s readiness to test by reviewing the candidate’s past examination history. TCOs can do this via the TCO Portal and accessing “Candidate Exam Inquiry.” DANTES does not manage National Test Centers (NTCs) and cannot provide direction to them.

Prometric, the testing agency which houses score reporting data for DANTES, has determined that retests of DSST exams are a result of the current configuration of their database. To prevent further retesting, DANTES is working with Prometric to reconfigure their system to key on test title vice exam form number. In addition, the DANTES

Score Reporting System, activated in 2004 and later consolidated with Prometric’s system in 2009, did not track retest events of the same test title for individual Service members. Prometric is also working to modify their database to include retests prior to 2004. The testing agencies will continue working with their NTC administrators to prevent retest of CLEP and DSST exams and monitor improvements underway for iBT technology at NTCs to enforce the no retest policy.

To further assist education centers in supporting the no-retest policy, a toll-free customer service number is available for test administrators to use to verify a Service member’s eligibility to test. This number is also available to request transcripts and study materials, to obtain the institution’s four-digit code needed for transcripts, and to receive non-emergency score reports. The toll-free customer service number is 1-877-471-9860.



To have the
**DANTES Information
Bulletin (DIB) sent
monthly to your e-mail,
click on the icon or send
an e-mail to
pubs@navy.mil.**

DANTES Web Site Hot News

**04/18/12: 2012 NAIMES Student
Spotlight Award application period open**

**4/10/12: New Edition Arrives - DANTES
Stock #2448**

**4/2/12: DoD completes extension of
tuition assistance policy requirement**

The importance of military evaluations

In a recent response of an inquiry to the American Council on Education (ACE), Director of Military Programs Michele Spires provided the difference between courses and occupations, both of which ACE evaluates for recommended credit through universities or colleges. She said, "For Military Programs, keep in mind that course and occupation reviews are very different in process. Courses are measurable and easier to evaluate. Occupations are experiential in nature and can oftentimes represent thousands of soldiers (Service members) at once." Spires addressed the importance of recognizing both the training/course rigors as well as the fields of study where Service members work.

Why are military evaluations needed?

As stated by Spires, "In terms of answering the why question, I think it's important to recognize that the process of transfer of academic credit from one institution to another is complex. We are presenting academic credit for extra-institutional evaluation of learning; this adds another layer of challenge. We want the ACE credit recommendations to be accepted and honored by academic institutions, not just as a sweep of credit to free electives, but properly aligned when appropriate to a degree plan."

Spires provided some transfer thoughts (from ACE's Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/CLLL/Joint.htm).

Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least three considerations:

1. The educational quality of the learning experience which the student transfers;
2. The comparability of the nature, content, and level of the learning experience to that offered by the receiving institution; and
3. The appropriateness and applicability of the learning experience to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student's educational goals.

The ACE evaluation of military courses and occupations involves sound practices benchmarked on those accrediting authorities to ensure comparability and applicability.

Look for additional information in upcoming DIBs.

MilEval SOP completed

The Joint-Service Military Evaluation (MilEval) Program representatives, who assembled at DANTES in January, have completed the MilEval Program standard operating procedure (SOP). The document outlines the similar requirements of each Service branch for conducting consistent and stable evaluations of military training courses, service occupations, and professional experiences for civilian academic credit. The final SOP was sent out to all POCs, Education Service Chiefs, and others at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (OUSD).

Congratulations to Michele Spires on her selection as Director of Military Programs at the American Council on Education!

May in U.S. history:

- 5, 1961:** Alan Shepard became the first American in space
- 8, 1884:** 33rd U.S. President Harry S. Truman born
- 10, 1869:** Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways linked at Promontory Point, Utah
- 14, 1607:** First permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown, Virginia
- 14, 1942:** Women allowed to enlist for noncombat duties
- 18, 1980:** Mount St. Helens volcano erupted in Washington
- 20, 1927:** Charles Lindbergh became the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic
- 20, 1932:** Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic
- 24, 1844:** Telegraph inventor Samuel Morse sent the first official telegraph message from the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., to Baltimore
- 25, 1787:** Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia
- 27, 1937:** Grand opening of San Francisco, Golden Gate Bridge
- 29, 1917:** 35th U.S. President John F. Kennedy born
- 30, 1922:** Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., dedicated
- 31, 1819:** American poet Walt Whitman born

DANTES Stock #2448 - new edition arrives

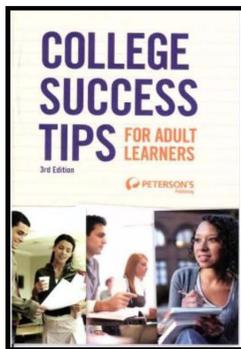
Peterson's book "College Success Tips for Adult Learners" has been a part of the DANTES publications inventory since 2007. The 2011 print is the 3rd edition and is a valuable booklet for military education centers and for individual Service members.

Many quick and easy tips abound in this booklet to include: selecting the right distance learning program, choosing your college classes, surviving standardized tests, study tactics and taking the right path to complete your degree. Remember it is never too late or too early to LEARN.

College Success Tips for Adult Learners

2011 Edition

DANTES Stock #2448



Limit: 100 per 3 months

Military Education Centers

Email: dist@navy.mil

Order your free copies

Provide:

Stock #2448, quantity, and your DANTES ID#

Top 10 Reasons to Continue Your Education

10. Fulfill a Dream – Or Begin One
9. Have Fun!
8. Make Connections That Can Link You to Future Jobs
7. Become Part of a Cultural Stew
6. Meet New People
5. Do What You Love Doing and Get Paid for It
4. Increase Your Sense of Personal Accomplishment
3. Advance in Your Career and Earn a Higher Income
2. Learn Critical-Thinking and Analytical Skills
1. Ensure That You Won't Get Left Behind

Top 10 MYTHS About College

10. College Graduates Don't Really Earn That Much More Money than Non-College Graduates
9. Professors Tend to Be Hostile to the Older, Nontraditional Student
8. You Need to Know What You Want
7. You Have to Pass Entrance Examinations in Order to Go to College
6. It Takes a Long, Long Time to Complete a College Program
5. It Takes a Lot of Money to Go to College
4. You Have to Have a Lot of Free Time to Go to College
3. You have to be Young to Go to College
2. College is Only for Unusually Creative People
1. College is Only for Unusually Bright People

From *College Success Tips for Adult Learners* by Peterson's. Copyright 2011. Reprinted with permission of Peterson's, a Nelnet company.

**Missed a DIB edition?
Click [HERE](#) to view
archived DIBs.**

**Calling all writers and camera-bugs!
Ed Centers - do you have a VoEd-related story
to share with other education professionals?
If so, DANTES is waiting to hear from you.**

Send submissions to pubs@navy.mil.



WW12 Team SPIRIT Trivia #10

Congratulations to Team Air Force! Sandra Azevedo was the first to correctly answer that there were 71 individual breakout sessions (within 8 concurrent sessions) scheduled to be presented at the WW12 symposium at the question's release time.

The Worldwide Team SPIRIT Competition's Trivia Contest is now in its final weeks. As enthusiasm builds for teams trying to win a share of the award points, organizers will offer one last "bonus round." In July, not only will players find the last regular question in this publication, but those who periodically check the symposium Web site and social media pages may find bonus questions posted randomly. The trivia contest officially ends on Friday, July 13. Good luck!

The point standings as of April 30, 2012:

- » 1740 USCG
- » 950 Navy
- » 730 Air Force
- » 710 Army
- » 420 USMC
- » 170 National Guard

The theme of the 2012 DoD Worldwide Education Symposium is "Educating the Force—Joint Effort, Joint Success." Remarkable success can, indeed, be achieved through joint effort. One example of this might be seen from a window seat by travelers flying into Las Vegas this July—Hoover Dam. Not only is the dam itself one

of the world's foremost engineering marvels, but a new Hoover Dam Bypass recently won the 2012 Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award.

JOINT EFFORT, JOINT SUCCESS

EDUCATING THE FORCE

WW12
DoD WORLDWIDE
EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM & EXPO

MGM GRAND, LAS VEGAS

JULY 23-27, 2012

WW12

DoD WORLDWIDE
EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM & EXPO

Trivia Question

#10

What is the formal name given to the new Hoover Dam Bypass?

Submit answers to dantesww@navy.mil. First correct answer wins 150 points and subsequent answers earn 10. Visit the WW12 Web site for complete contest rules.

Meet the speaker. . . A monthly preview of WW12 speakers



Cynthia Calongne

A Doctoral Professor of Computer Science with Colorado Technical University since 1996, Calongne is Communications Chair for the International Society for Technology in Education's SIG Innovative Learning Technologies and Public Relations and Media Relations Area Chair for the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life of Second Life, which has raised \$1.2 million since 2004.

As a software engineer and systems programmer for Air Force Space Command's Wing Command Post at Schriever AFB, she hosted 100+ conference presentations, taught 30+ classes in virtual worlds, supported two National Science Foundation grants and mentored 400+ middle school students as they studied in a virtual world.

Calongne was a Grand Prize Winner with Air University in the 2010 Federal Virtual World Challenge for The Mars Expedition Strategy Challenge. Her research blends virtual worlds, emerging media, education, innovation and game design in support of the U.S. Army's Military Open Simulator Enterprise Strategy (MOSES).



DoD Worldwide Education Symposium keynote speakers announced

An impressive lineup of WW2012 keynote speakers was recently announced. Each will present a unique and highly qualified perspective to address some of the most important concerns facing today's military educators. Michelle Jones will set the tone by delivering the opening keynote address on Tuesday, July 24; Dr. Martha Kanter will speak on Wednesday morning

in support of the Higher Education general session; and Capt. Scotty Smiley will close the symposium by sharing memorable insights on Thursday, July 26.

Make plans now to be on hand for what will certainly be the most important symposium yet, dedicated to the theme of "Educating the Force—Joint Effort, Joint Success." Get more information at www.ww2012.com.



Michele S. Jones
**Director of External Veterans/
 Military Affairs & Community
 Outreach, President's Veterans
 Employment Initiative**
Tuesday, July 24, 8:45 AM

A member of the Senior Executive Service, Jones provides leadership and advice on strategic approaches and opportunities to support veterans, Wounded Warrior III and Injured Programs as well as other Personnel and Readiness and veterans' initiatives. Jones retired from the Army in 2007 after 25 years of service. She distinguished herself by holding the highest noncommissioned officer position of any woman in the Army and was the first female Command Sergeant Major of any of the Army's Components, Active or Reserve. The recipient of many notable awards, Jones has been featured in newspapers and magazines and on television.



Martha Kanter
Under Secretary of Education
Wednesday, July 25, 8:30 AM

Confirmed by the Senate in 2009, Under Secretary Kanter reports to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and oversees policies, programs, and activities related to postsecondary education, adult and career-technical education, federal student aid, and five White House Initiatives. She has been recognized for her work, including being named Woman of the Year by the 24th Assembly District, Woman of Achievement by San Jose Mercury News and the Women's Fund, and Woman of the Year for Santa Clara County by the American Association of University Women. Kanter holds a doctorate in organization and leadership from the University of San Francisco.



Capt. Scotty Smiley
**U.S. Army, author & wounded
 warrior**
Thursday, July 26, 3:35 PM

Capt. Smiley, a Ranger and combat-diver qualified infantryman, was the Army's first active-duty blind officer and its first blind company commander. Since losing his sight, Smiley has surfed in Hawaii, skied in Vail, skydived, climbed Mount Rainier, completed a triathlon, and graduated from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business with his MBA. The Army Times named Smiley its "Soldier of the Year" in 2007, and in 2008 he won an ESPY as the Best Outdoor Athlete. He received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, taught leadership at West Point and commanded the Warrior Transition Unit at West Point's Keller Army Medical Center.

FROM THE DESK OF THE SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR



HMCM (FMF/SW) David Acuff
Senior Enlisted Advisor

DoD Voluntary Education Advisory Group Update

The DoD Voluntary Education Advisory Group (DVEAG) Charter is in its final draft stage and plans are in the works for the implementation of this important advisory group. Many colleagues across the Services have expressed a desire for a medium and/or forum designed to receive and express ideas, improvements and concerns within military VolEd. DANTES Director Dr. Carol Berry formally proposed the establishment of a formalized advisory group to

the Inter-Service Voluntary Education Board (IVEB) and both the board and DANTES have worked hard on preparing the advisory group's charter.

The DVEAG will be comprised of military education center personnel from each of the five Armed Services who will be nominated by respective Service chiefs of education, representing Active and Reserve Component Service branches within DoD and the Department of Homeland Security. This group would then advise the IVEB and DANTES regarding field concerns with respect to voluntary military education services and programs.

The DVEAG presents a unique and excellent opportunity for military education colleagues to vet ideas and concerns directly from the field and then present them formally to the IVEB via DANTES. While the DVEAG will not be responsible for actual policy development, the advisory group will be afforded a venue to deliver comment and input directly from those who have the direct pulse of our military members regarding VolEd.

At the discretion of each Service, up to two primaries and at least one alternate member may be appointed. Members can serve up to a three-year term. Funding for members' travel, per diem and miscellaneous expenses will be the responsibility of the Service sponsoring the individual(s).

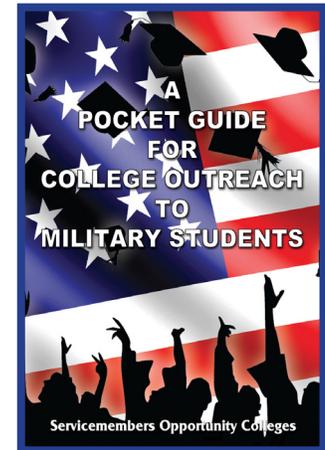
Are you interested in adding a new dimension to serving military VolEd through participation in this ground-breaking advisory group? If so, let your chain of command know! Membership criteria include: (1) nomination by respective Service Chief; (2) currently serving in a military voluntary education setting; (3) and have current experience working with DANTES programs and products.

I'm personally excited about this remarkable opportunity to provide a new dimension of insight and acumen directly from those who are serving at the deck-plates. The goal is to see the DVEAG become a valuable and integral resource that both DANTES and the IVEB can depend upon to deliver clear and relevant concerns directly from the Fleet, Field, and Air. Stay "tuned" for further information regarding the DVEAG.

Until next time, keep up with DANTES on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DANTES.DoD or contact me at ea@navy.mil. I would enjoy hearing from you.

New SOC Pub now available

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) recently published "A Pocket Guide for College Outreach to Military Students."



This resource is for colleges and universities to help shape their outreach to the military community and guide the development and implementation of quality education programs and support services for the military and veteran students at their institutions. It is designed to assist institutions in establishing effective relationships with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and their education personnel.

Colleges' staff will find the Pocket Guide a starting point in developing relationships with the military community and military students. It provides specific guidance for college outreach to potential students and offers suggestions for supporting military students enrolled in the college. The Pocket Guide also points to standards, regulations, and resources that apply to the delivery of education programs to military students and veterans.

To order this publication, contact SOC at 1-800-368-5622 or e-mail socmail@aascu.org.

FROM THE DESK OF THE RESERVE COMPONENT ADVISOR

March was Women's History Month. Dr. Sandra Winborne, DANTES Military Evaluations Program Manager, and I presented observances spanning from Pensacola, Fla., to Biloxi, Miss., to Anchorage, Alaska. Our presentations tied the Women's History Month theme of "Women's Education, Women's Empowerment" to the central DANTES message that education is empowerment.

The Pensacola and Biloxi briefs were hosted by the Veterans' Administration Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System. Our speeches focused on the needs of women veterans, who, according to U.S. Government Accountability Office report 12-182, have doubled in number from 4 percent of all veterans in 1990 to 8 percent, or 1.8 million, today.

The observance theme was a perfect segue to emphasize the fact that education can influence employment, which can greatly impact the quality of one's life and sense of empowerment. I have met too many frustrated transitioning Service members who know that they are qualified for a particular job, but do not have the "golden ticket" that will get them through the personnel office door – a college degree or credential.

Although gender barriers within the Services continue to dissolve, as evidenced with the 14,000+ positions recently opened to Army and Marine female Service members, gender challenges still remain. Events such as the annual Joint Women's Leadership Symposium (www.sealeader.org/leadership-symposium-summary/), also held in March, were established to promote women's empowerment and examine issues such as the ongoing integration of women in the armed services. Capt. Cathy Masar, Chief Strategist to the Chief of Naval Personnel, attended the symposium, noting "The Joint Women's Leadership Symposium was an amazing event! To see over 1700 women in uniform from all Services, and several from other nations, was overwhelming, empowering, and very inspirational. The panel speakers provided a wide range of perspectives on issues of interest. I would encourage Service women — and men — to attend next year's symposium."

There are many organizations focused on assisting and empowering women, such as the Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C., (www.womensmemorial.org) and the Monument to Women Veterans (www.monumenttowomenveterans.com), to be built in Pensacola, Fla. The Monument to Women

Veterans will serve as a gateway to resources and services for issues currently impacting women veterans like PTSD, sexual assault,



Pictured (l-r): Lt. Col. Eurydice Stanley, DANTES Reserve Component Advisor; Phylis Alford, Women Veteran Program Manager; and Dr. Sandra Winborne, DANTES Military Evaluations Program Manager.

unemployment, and homelessness. The need for assistance is great. For example, the current number of homeless women veterans more than doubled from 1,380 in FY06 to 3,328 in FY10. The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to ending homelessness by 2015, and education and employment will be important factors to consider.

Similar to the observances in Florida, I presented the preceding information at women's history observances in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska, along with 15 "Handwriting on the Wall" educational briefs in one week. Christi Foli, Equal Employment Manager for the 673rd Air Base Wing EEO office in Anchorage, Alaska, attended my initial "HOW" brief last year and believed that it would be beneficial for the Service members at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Fort Wainwright. Almost 800 Service members attended a brief or an observance, and the message seemed to take hold as evidenced by reports of a marked increase in Service members requesting assistance from their Education Service Officers!

The theme of Women's History month and the efforts of niche organizations are shared to reinforce the point that knowledge is more than power, in this economy, it can mean survival! Pursuit of education is not limited to gender, but studies have shown that women are especially harder hit by bad economic times, which can make the need for education even more pressing. Invest in and empower yourself, regardless of gender, by pursuing your education while you have resources such as tuition assistance and DANTES available to you while you serve.

I look forward to hearing from you. You can contact me at rca.navy.mil.

Ensuring spouses get the education they want and deserve

By Bianca Strzalkowski

(Editor's note: Bianca Strzalkowski is the 2011 Military Spouse magazine Military Spouse of the Year (MSOY). The below are excerpts from her April 10, 2012, blog located at www.huffingtonpost.com/bianca-strzalkowski.)

In 1999, as an energetic teenager, I started college in New Jersey. At the time, my now-husband was going through boot camp and his initial training in the Marine Corps. My desire to be where his boots were planted led me to a second college, just a year later. The rest of my educational story sounds the same, transfer upon transfer because of military moves or dropping a semester entirely because of life happening.

Fast forwarding to 2012: By now I should have earned a PhD with all of the schooling under my belt. And yet I am still longing to complete my bachelor's degree.

My story isn't unique. It's common among the military spouses of the U. S. Armed Forces to readjust our sails repeatedly as we navigate military life. Yet we share a common characteristic: tenacity.

The time has come to rally our academic institutions to design programs that adapt to our lives rather than us trying to fit the cookie-cutter mold of traditional college students. Our lives are anything but traditional. And so I'm trying to make that happen.

Military Spouse magazine created the Military Spouse of the Year program to create advocates within our community. Once they awarded me the title, it was my shot to make a difference. Since the creation of the Military Spouse Education Initiative (MSEI) in July 2011, I have met with our Congressional leadership, educational organizations, the Department of Education, and more importantly, with the women and men that this epidemic is affecting. It's an epidemic of being told they can't pursue dreams because military

life is too demanding. That belief stops here, with me and those on-board with making the MSEI a reality.

One example of the commitment to the education of our military families is the programs being created by military-friendly schools. Some higher education institutions are broadening veteran-based programs to include military spouses. Last week, I attended the VA ACME conference, where I met representatives from schools like University of Maryland's University College, Coastline Community College and Strayer University who have flexible course schedules and special tuition rates to meet our educational needs.

Beyond assisting military spouses with tuition funding, the MSEI includes two other components: Volunteer Experience to College Credit and Course Transferability. Over 80% of our spouses volunteer within their communities, and I know firsthand the valuable skillsets that come from that experience.

Every community of people deserves a voice. For 2011, the voice for my community just happened to be a loud one from Jersey focused on education as Military Spouse magazine's 2011 MSOY. In May we will name our next advocate. As my role fades, my commitment to the 1.1 million patriots I serve with will not go away - it will transfer to the hyper-local online community I'm helping build called www.baseguide.com.

We are part of the greatest nation on Earth, and the American dream lives on in communities around our country. I will never stop believing in our ability as a country to achieve all we set out to achieve.

DoD completes extension of TA policy requirement

The Department of Defense (DoD) completed a 90-day extension March 30, 2012, for implementation of a policy requiring schools to have a signed DoD Tuition Assistance (TA) Program Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to participate in the TA program. The 90-day extension allowed the DoD to work with stakeholders to address issues associated with the Memorandum.

The Memorandum is intended to ensure that Service members have the widest variety of choices for their continued education. The DoD is now coordinating the revised Memorandum within the Pentagon. Once coordination is completed, schools will have ample opportunity to review and sign the MOU prior to the policy going into effect.

The Defense Department anticipates the new policy will **go into effect during the summer of 2012**. Until that time, academic institutions participating in the TA Program will continue to receive tuition assistance, regardless of whether they have signed the original Memorandum with the Department by the original due date of March 30, 2012, or not. Once the new policy goes into effect, only those schools that have signed an MOU with the Department (either the original or the new, revised Memorandum) will be able to receive TA.

Institutions that have signed or are in the process of signing the original Memorandum will not have to re-sign nor make changes to the document.

For more information, go to www.dodmou.com.

CFPB releases financial aid comparison shopper

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) launched the next phase of its Know Before You Owe student loan project April 11 by releasing a beta version of the Financial Aid Comparison Shopper (www.consumerfinance.gov/payingforcollege), an interactive, online tool designed to help families plan for the costs of post-secondary education.

“Student loan debt has crossed the \$1 trillion mark and tuition continues to climb,” said CFPB Director Richard Cordray. “Now more than ever, students and their families need to know before they owe. Our Financial Aid Comparison Shopper helps students make apples to apples comparisons of their offers and pick the one that works best for their financial future.”

The CFPB kicked off the Know Before You Owe student loan project in October by working with the Department of Education on a draft Financial Aid Shopping Sheet that higher education institutions could use to present families with a uniform, easy-to-understand explanation of the total cost of post-secondary education and their options for financing it. The Financial Aid Comparison Shopper builds on that by helping students to compare the information across schools.

The beta version of the Financial Aid Comparison Shopper has more than 7,500 schools and institutions in its database, including vocational schools and community, state, and private colleges. It draws information from publicly available data provided by government statistical agencies. With the prototype, students and their families can compare the following across multiple financial aid offers:

- » estimated monthly student loan payment after graduation
- » grant and scholarship offers
- » school-specific metrics such as graduation, retention, and federal student loan default rates
- » estimated debt level at graduation in relationship to the average starting salary

The Financial Aid Comparison Shopper also includes a “Military Benefit Calculator” that can estimate education benefits for Service members, veterans, and their families. The calculator includes military tuition assistance and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

To read the entire article, go to www.consumerfinance.gov/pressreleases/consumer-financial-protection-bureau-releases-financial-aid-comparison-shopper/.

NAIMES accepting 2012 SSA applications

The National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services (NAIMES) and MBS Direct LLC are pleased to announce the 2012 NAIMES Student Spotlight Award (SSA) program.

The purpose of the SSA is to recognize a student, undergraduate or graduate, who demonstrates excellent academic achievement in pursuit of their civilian postsecondary education. Eligible participants are active duty personnel from all Service branches. ROTC students, military academy students and those using special tuition assistance programs are not eligible to apply. Current students are encouraged to submit an application and project to compete for one of three \$1,200 cash awards.

The application period for the 2012 NAIMES Student Spotlight Award is April 16 – Aug. 31, 2012. Winners will be announced on Oct. 29, 2012.

Applications must be completed on the NAIMES Student Spotlight Award form, which can be obtained on the NAIMES Web site: www.naimes.org.

More information can be found at:

- » www.dantes.doded.mil/Homepage/Docs/news/HotNews_2012_NAIMES_SSA.pdf
- » Cheri Arfsten, Chair, Student Spotlight Award Committee, cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu

DLRSA now available

The DANTES Distance Learning Readiness Self-Assessment (DANTES DLRSA) was developed to help prospective distance learners self-assess their readiness for distance learning. Check it out at www.dantes.doded.mil/DANTES_Homepage.html.

Mystery Quote:

“To be able to be caught up into the world of thought - that is being educated”

If you know who said this, let us know at pubs@navy.mil.

The first correct responder will get his or her name published in the next DIB.

Seth Marc Kamen, SOCCOAST Project Director, Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges was the first to identify the author of last month’s quote as Brad Henry.

Great job!

TESTING CALENDAR

June 2012

11 LSAT (50 United States, Canada, Caribbean)
 12 LSAT (Europe, Middle East, Africa, South America)
 25 LSAT (Asia, Australia, New Zealand)

July 2012

21-25 Praxis*

Notes:

- Overseas test sites send orders six weeks before the test date.
- CONUS test sites send orders four weeks before the test date.
- Contractors ship tests to arrive just before the planned test date.

*Choose only one day to administer. Submit separate Prometric order forms for GRE Subject and Praxis.

http://www.dantes.doded.mil/Sub%20Pages/Exams/Docs/exams_calendar.pdf

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