

Military OneSource Podcast — MCFP

Program title: DANTES Podcast

Episode transcript:

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the podcast. I'm Bruce Moody.

There are education benefits for all service members. We're going to be talking about the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, called DANTES. I know we have a rule against using acronyms, but we're going to be referring to this a lot today, so DANTES. Here to talk about DANTES is Erin Roberts. Welcome to the podcast, Erin.

Erin Roberts:

Hi, Bruce. I am so glad to be here. I have to say, I'm hoping the majority of the folks listening know that they've heard of DANTES before, they just didn't know what it meant.

Bruce:

Yeah, absolutely. Let's just jump into this episode. First tell us, what is DANTES?

Erin:

In simple terms, DANTES provides no-cost education and career planning programs for all actively serving U.S. military members. Now, I say "actively serving" because that includes your National Guard and your reserve service members. Our defense programs can actually help a military member at every stage of their military career, from entry into the service, just when they're coming in, to the final stage of civilian transition, when they're looking for a new job, a new career.

Now DANTES is actually a Defense Department component. A lot of people don't realize that. We provide management of defense voluntary education programs to make sure that there's no duplication of effort among the services. But the focus here is for our service members that are listening and their families, we exist for them so that they can gain the knowledge they need to achieve their education goals, which is so important, to advance in their military careers, which for those that are staying in for 20, very important, and most of them will need an education and to eventually transition into

the civilian workforce, which we have programs that will help them at every stage of that military service.

Bruce:

Well, awesome, awesome, because DANTEs has really grown and evolved since the days when I was using it, so I'm looking forward to unpacking this. Let's just begin, who benefits from DANTEs education programs?

Erin:

OK, so all actively serving military members in all of the military services, including the National Guard, the reserves and the Coast Guard. We also have two programs that I'll tell you about that help military spouses and family members.

Bruce:

OK, good. We'll definitely get into that, but let's begin with first-term service members. What kind of programs do you have that would be the most beneficial to someone in their first term?

Erin:

OK, so the first one that comes to my mind is the Academic Skills Training Program. I'd served for 21 years, and Academic Skills Training is the program that's going to help all members that are just starting out, but it's also going to help them when they're already working on a degree. Basically, the Academic Skills Training Program is the OASC program, or the Online Academic Skills Course. OASC. I'll use that term. What this program does is it helps members with math, science and English via assessments that they'll take that target areas that the user needs the most help with. The program will tell them what they need the most help with in math, science or English, and then you'll take all of the courses that they've got within the program. They have an admin help desk and they have no-cost tutoring to help the service member.

The big thing here is you've got 24/7 help from the help desk, from tutoring, and the tutoring can be via video. I mean, I just love this. This is crazy. You could send them a math problem and they're going to show you how to fix it, how to solve it, and they're not going to do it for you, they're going to teach you how to do it. The Academic Skills Training Program also has a mobile app that will help you and you can do all of the courses on the mobile app and it is just a great program to help those that are starting. But also, you can see, if you're taking a calculus class, you can use this program. Typically, you're well into probably your bachelor's [degree] with some killer math classes, and you can get free tutoring through the Academic Skills Training Program. That's the number one. I'm going to actually talk to you about four programs.

Then we have the Kuder Journey Program, which is a career planning and education planning program. Basically, what that does is, you take three short assessments. One is what do you like to do, and you'll answer all those questions; then the second one is the skills that you have; and the third one is the environments that you would like to work

in. The program takes those three assessments and then provides the user with a list of the best careers for them at the time that they took this assessment. They can take the assessment several times throughout their military career and it can be used to help them with retirement.

I think that's the best one right there because you know how you have a job when you're in the military, but then when you get out, you may want to do something different. Well, if you take the Kuder Journey Program and you take those assessments, it might tell you where you should look at going, and then it's going to tell you. Love this, the education path that's necessary to meet the employment that you're looking for, so I think that is a great program. But you can also use it, let's say you're a first-term airman, and you have a job, but you think you want to change your career. Take this in your first term and then maybe you could look at what another career is that you might like to do. That's the second one. Love those two programs.

Then you have TA DECIDE. Basically, TA DECIDE is a public-facing website for users to use to compare thousands of colleges and universities that they would like to attend. Every school on the list is vetted by the DOD and is eligible for tuition assistance from

Now, I'm going to talk about the fourth one, but I'm going to keep it pretty short because most people know about Credit by Exam. You're familiar with Credit by Exam, right, Bruce?

Bruce:

Yeah, that's basically you're listing a bunch of really amazing resources, and the only thing that I did was Credit by Exam.

Erin:

OK. Well, I think all of us ... I won't say "all of us," many of us have done it, or we know somebody that has. Credit By Exam is also known as the program that offers the CLEP and the DSST exams. Most folks, like I said, know about the program, and what it does. It can provide college credit to a user for knowledge they already have. I like this program for service members that just got out of tech school because I'm just going to say, if you're going in for criminal justice and you've just gotten out of tech school, why not go and look at CLEP and DSST exams in criminal justice? You've got the knowledge. I like this program for that. It saves the members time and money. How does it save time? Because DANTEs pays for the first attempt at any exam that a service member takes and it saves time because you can take an exam in a couple of hours versus eight to 12 weeks in a classroom.

The big thing there is saving time and money, but we do always want to tell folks, you need to make sure you see your education counselor because they will help you make sure that the exam you want to take is accepted by your college for the program that you're trying to get, so it's incredibly important that service members see an education counselor to make sure that credit can be applied to their college degree program. Then, of course, you study, you take the exam and then, if your school takes the credits,

you have three credits, three or six. It all depends, of course, just like anything. I'll close on this note, you could take these exams remotely now. In the program notes for this podcast, all of the links to these programs will be in there and you can find more information on the DAN TES website.

Bruce:

There you go. But wait, there's more.

Erin:

Yes.

Bruce:

All right, so that was stuff for your first-term service members. Now, let's talk about programs to help enlisted service members with a few tours under their belts and maybe looking to transition from the military.

Erin:

Yes, and I did jump into transitioning from the military probably because I transitioned and my heart is with folks getting out and it's just so important to really take advantage of your education benefits and use them while you're in because I believe, and I can attest, that they will help you to get a good-paying job when you get on the outside. Folks with degrees and experience, you're just going to have a leg up.

Back to your question, for service members with a few tours and those transitioning from the military, we have a couple of programs, but the main one here is the Military Training Evaluation Program. Basically, what that does is that it evaluates your military training and experiences throughout the time that you were in the military, so you can use this if you're in your first tour, but you're going to get more training and you're going to get more experience as you continue on to your 20-year retirement. MTEP evaluates that and then provides college-recommended credits that your school can choose to take and grant you. OK, they're just recommended, but it's up to your school to give you those credits.

Now, tied in with the Military Training Evaluation Program, or MTEP, is also the Joint Services Transcript, or the JST, and basically, your JST, that's your military transcript, it's free, it's online. All service members can download it or they can send it directly to their schools. If you take CLEP and TSST exams, they are automatically loaded to your JST.

Now, I did say "all military members," keeping in mind the Air Force has the CCAF, so you would have to work with JST if you took any type of DOD training to get yourself a separate one, so really, the JST is for your Army, your Navy, your Marine Corps, your Coast Guard and your reserve members. Air Force, they're a little different. We know a lot of Air Force members spend a lot of time with the other services, so if they've gone to DOD training schools or Army training schools, those credits will be on a JST for them, they just have to work with JST folks.

Then, for those retiring, the benefit from the JST is that they write your military experience into, I call it “civilian speak,” but basically, it helps you when you’re writing your resume because the skills that you got in the military on your JST are written in civilian wording, which is very important when you write your resume, you want to make sure you’re using words that the outside employers are going to understand. Does that make sense?

Bruce:

Yeah, sure. Of course.

Erin:

Then the last big program that DANTEs offers right in that transition category is the Troops to Teachers program. Now, I know a lot of people are going to say, “Hey, wait a minute. I heard that that got ended, that was canceled.” It was canceled, but it was reauthorized because it’s a great program. Troops to Teachers helps service members and veterans become kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers. You know we need teachers nowadays.

We are still working on details of the new program, but I do have some good news to share with everybody. You can find information on Troops to Teachers on the DANTEs website, but you can also go to the proudtoserveagain.com website, which is the old Troops to Teachers site. That’s up and that’s active now. What you’re going to find there is information about 25 states that are offering assistance to military members and veterans. When you fill out the program interest form on the website, it will put you in a system and then somebody will contact you and you can work with them on getting more information about the states that you want to teach in.

Bruce:

Troops to Teachers as a topic is going to be an upcoming podcast episode on this program, so we’ll be thrilled to have you or someone from your team back to really dig into that. Really, a lot of these things are just scratching the surface, and we really hope that people get the idea if through no other means than the sheer enthusiasm that Erin brings to this podcast episode that there’s a lot out there, and so we’ll try to unpack in subsequent episodes. As I had said earlier, DANTEs has grown and expanded quite a bit over the years, and you have resources available to family members. Can you talk about that?

Erin:

We do. We have two programs that do help spouses and family members, the Academic Skills Training Program, which again, no cost and you get that live tutoring, helps spouses and family members. Then the Credit by Exam Program, some spouses, now I don’t have all of the details, but some spouses can use the Credit by Exam Program through the My CAA Program. In the program notes, we will have a link or an email that they can use to get more information on that. But again, Credit by Exam is a great tool to save time and money when spouses are working towards their degrees.

Bruce:

Very cool. Again, we've covered a lot of material. For when people want to learn more about the DANTEs education programs, what's a good step to take?

Erin:

OK, so it's really quite easy. We have a help desk on our website located in the bottom right corner. If you go to the website, you've got the DANTEs help desk, but up at the top you also have a link that says FAQs and you can go to the FAQs and ask your questions there, get all the answers that you need from articles that are there as well. We also have what's called the MilEd Benefits app, and again, you can get that from the Apple Store or the Google Store and you can get all the information that you really need about the app on our website. Up at the top you'll also see a link for that. Then social media, we have information on Facebook, on Twitter, on YouTube, on LinkedIn and on Instagram, so you can find us pretty much anywhere, and you can Google us as well. Just Google "DANTEs" and we should pop up.

Bruce:

I get the idea; I get the impression. Any final words to really encourage people to come around and check out what you got?

Erin:

I probably would say that service members get a lot of benefits, but the one benefit that they can take advantage of while they're active that's going to help them when they transition is using their education benefits.

Our programs support them in completing their degrees and getting promoted. I'm sure those in the Air Force that are listening know that the further you go up in the ranks, you've got to have a degree, so it's important, and it's free. I always say it's a win-win. Take the time, go look at the website, make a plan, talk to an education counselor, and just get started. You might take a semester off, but that's OK. Have a plan. Bruce, it took me my entire career to get my master's degree. I took one class at a time, but I got it, and the military paid for it, so it's just a win-win.

Bruce:

Erin, we've covered a lot of ground, and it'll be thrilling to have you back to really dig into more of this.

Erin:

We are dedicated to getting information out about the programs that DANTEs offers because we're here for the service member, so we look forward to the podcast coming up in a couple of months on the Troops to Teachers program, and we definitely, as long as you'll have us back, we'll come back.

Bruce:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Totally welcome, so we look forward to talking again.

Erin:

OK, have a great evening.

Bruce:

You, too. Erin Roberts from the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, more commonly known as DANTES. I want to remind you that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We are a website, a call center, we're all over social media, and now we're a podcast. So go ahead and subscribe. We cover a huge range of topics to help military families as they navigate military life.

I'm Bruce Moody. Thanks for listening. Bye-bye.