

## Military OneSource Podcast — DANTES Program Overview

### 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 [Military OneSource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil).

#### Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the podcast. I'm Bruce Moody. Our guest today is no stranger to the podcast. Erin Roberts is with the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, more commonly known as DANTES. Erin, great to have you back on the podcast.

#### Erin Roberts:

Hi Bruce. We are so thankful for this opportunity to be here and to talk about DANTES. You guys are fabulous. So yeah, let's get started.

#### Bruce Moody:

Yeah. So what we're going to do today is just take an across-the-board general look at DANTES, the education support, what it's all about because it's a really amazing program. So let's just start at the very beginning here. What is DANTES?

#### Erin Roberts:

I love that idea. So DANTES in real simple terms, provides education and career planning programs for all actively serving U.S. military members in all of the services at no cost to them. And basically military members can use our programs at every stage of their military career, from the point of entry in their first enlistment, all the way to transitioning into the civilian workforce for their next career basically.

So we help military members gain the knowledge that they need to actually achieve their education goals, advance in their military careers and eventually transition at the end of their military service. And the big thing is, it's all no cost to them.

#### Bruce Moody:

Excellent. So when you say them, who's them? Who benefits from DANTES education programs?

#### Erin Roberts:

Yes. So the main target that we are trying to reach is actively-serving military members. And that means members in all of the military services, including the Coast Guard, the National Guard

and the reserve components. But some of our programs are able to help spouses of military members, family members and DOD civilians depending on their service.

**Bruce Moody:**

And we'll get a little bit into that but when looking to start on education goals, how should someone get started with the DANES program?

**Erin Roberts:**

That is a great question because we just redesigned our website.

**Bruce Moody:**

I know.

**Erin Roberts:**

And we have a new website. Yes, so I would say when you're thinking about going back to school, when you're thinking about looking at getting a college degree, I would say the first thing you want to do is do some research and go to our website. So our website is [dantes.mil](http://dantes.mil). Review the website, go and look at it, look at the programs that we offer and then you'll see that we've got a page that connects you to education counselors. You want to really do your research and then make a plan.

And that's where the education counselors come in. All of the services have them and when you get an idea of what you want to do and the programs you want to use, then you can go to your education counselor and say, "Tell me more about this and how can I get started?" I also want to mention that you can work on your education anywhere that you are stationed. So one of the programs that DANES has is we support overseas locations. So that's something that I just want to throw that out here real quick because it doesn't matter where you're at, DANES can help you no matter where you're serving.

**Bruce Moody:**

What programs have you got to help with the planning or deciding on a degree program?

**Erin Roberts:**

I'll start out with the Kuder Journey Program and that is a program for career planning. And basically what it does for the service member, they sign in, they go in and they register for the program from our website and they'll take three assessments that pretty much look at what they like to do, what their skills are and what kind of environment do they prefer to work in. Now, I know military members, they all have a job when they come in, but it doesn't mean you're going to do that for the rest of your career.

So that's where the Kuder Journey Program comes in well because you may be in the perfect career but it may also, from the assessments, tell you, you might look at something else that you would be good at. So from the assessments, basically it tells you what type of a person you are. It's kind of like the old Myers-Briggs. And then you take that information and it will match you to

college programs that will help you get to that career. So the Kuder Journey Program kind of starts you out right there.

And then you've got the Academic Skills Training Program. And that course will help learners determine if they have the skills they need to take an English class to take math classes, to take science classes. So if you're looking at taking an English class and you have to pass a placement test, this is the perfect program to use and it will tell you where your skills are. And it's called a MAP Program. My Academic Predictor is what MAP stands for, and it's going to tell you, "Hey, you got this." Or it's going to say, "Hey, you might want to work in these areas."

But that's a great tool. And they've got tutoring services, no cost. I will add that in, again. Tutoring services, they've got an academic help desk that you can go to and they also have a mobile app. So that program has a lot to offer the person that's just starting out, I think. But I say you can use this one throughout your military career depending on what service you're in and what degree program you're looking at taking. Because eventually you're going to have to take a statistics class. Were you good in statistics? I was not.

**Bruce Moody:**

I have stories that tell you that I was not good at statistics.

**Erin Roberts:**

Yes. Yeah, they're going to get a tutor to help them with statistics. So definitely like that program. And then the last program I can think about if you're looking at doing your education is, TA DECIDE. And basically what TA DECIDE is, it's a public facing website that users can use to compare all of the colleges and universities.

I think there's about 2,500 and they've all been vetted by the DOD and they all can accept tuition assistance dollars. So that's a great resource to just go and look at. Do they accept TA? You can compare different colleges. "Hey, I'm thinking about these three." And then you can put them all in and get your comparison tool that tells you which one might meet your criteria that you're looking for.

**Bruce Moody:**

So that covers that chapter in the story of someone's education journey. They've decided, like us, that math ain't their thing and they go into public affairs. There is a lot of us folks, a lot of us who have done that. Let's skip ahead and once we've decided on a degree program, we know the direction which we want to go. What are the tools to help me finish my degree faster?

**Erin Roberts:**

Oh, that's an easy one. That is definitely an easy one. That's going to be your Credit by Exam Program. So the Credit by Exam Program, a lot of people may have heard of this but that's the CLEP and the DSST exams, there's two sets of exams and I'll make a point here. DSST, some people used to think it stood for Dante's Standardized Tests. It doesn't anymore. DSST is run by Prometric and they offer about 30 different exams that you can take.

And then CLEP is run by College Board. They offer about 30 different exams. And the nice part about these exams is if you go and you use your education counselor, they'll be able to tell you and you can also find it on the website, which schools will take CLEP and DSST exams. So just off the cuff, I know if you are a security forces or military forces, they have criminal justice classes. You use your military experience and training and you can go with a little bit of studying. You want to make sure you study.

You can take these exams at no cost to you because DANTEs pays for the very first one in any of these exams. So if you study, we pay for them. And if you pass, you get three credits. There are a couple exams that are worth six credits. The grades you can get them to go directly to your school, they'll send you an official transcript. And they also go on the joint services transcript, which I'll talk about here in a minute.

And the big thing about Credit by Exam is you're saving both time and money. It takes a couple hours to take an exam versus eight to 12 weeks. So really that's something to look at. Go see what the exams are and if there's one that you think that you can do some studying on and pass it, you're going to save yourself that time.

**Bruce Moody:**

Are these second attempts free?

**Erin Roberts:**

No.

**Bruce Moody:**

Which is why we need to talk about the education counselors.

**Erin Roberts:**

Yes. And the big thing there when you go, and you talk to an education counselor, is they're going to help you look at your college program, and they're going to help you work with that school to see, number one, you don't want to take the exam if the school's not going to take it and give you credit for it.

So talking with your education counselors is really beneficial to any member that's working on their degree. They're there to help you. They're just waiting for you to come and ask the question. But yeah, study, too. You want to make sure you study. And there are study guides out there.

**Bruce Moody:**

So now we're talking about people who have maybe been in for a couple of years, they got a couple of tools under their belt, maybe they're looking to transition from the military. This is where they're at and they're looking to say, "Hey, I've done all this stuff for the military. I've gotten all this training, I have all this experience. How much of that translates into credit toward my degree?"

**Erin Roberts:**

That's where the Military Training Evaluations and the Joint Services Transcript comes in. And basically what MTEP is, they work with ACE, the American Council on Education. And ACE evaluates a lot of the training that service members have. And they'll take that training and give it so many college credits and they will provide service members with an official military transcript, if you want to call it that. But the official name is the Joint Services Transcript.

Now, these are primarily for all of the services except for the Air Force. And I say that because the Air Force has the Community College of the Air Force and their transcripts. But everybody else can get a free Joint Services Transcript or JST and all they have to do, again, is go to our website. It will point them to the website for JST and they can go in there and set that up and you can set that up now. I mean, if you're a first term, you could go in and check and make sure.

And I would tell somebody, keep checking it each time you move, you PCS. Make sure your information is in there and it's up to date. And the nice part about this, I think, is the fact that your Joint Services Transcript turns your military training and experiences into civilian speak. It puts it into words that a civilian employer would understand.

Sometimes we have a tendency of doing a resume and using military jargon and the civilian workforce doesn't know what it means. But when you look at your military transcript, the JST, it's going to put it into civilian terminology. It's free. You can get it online, you can download unofficial transcripts and you can have official transcripts sent to your schools.

**Bruce Moody:**

Let's just take a different turn here. We've been talking about what DANTEs does for service members. Let's talk about what DANTEs can do for family members and civilians.

**Erin Roberts:**

Yes. Family members and civilians are so important because they support their service members. And so there are a couple of programs that you're going to want to go to the website and you're going to want to look at the eligibility criteria and see if you meet that, if you're a service member. Because some of the programs, because the services fund it or pay for it, your family members might be able to use it. Academic Skills Training is one of them. So I would say that's definitely one to go and check and see. And then the Credit by Exam Program through the MyCAA Program for spouses, they can take some of the CLEP and DSST at no cost to them.

**Bruce Moody:**

Right. And there's lots of help. So tell us a little bit about the website and the various ways that folks can learn more about DANTEs and your programs?

**Erin Roberts:**

The one-stop shop is the website [dantes.mil](http://dantes.mil). Very easy to find. And on that, you will find that we have a help desk with FAQs, so if you've got some simple questions, you can go in and use the help desk for those. We also have a mobile app, so there is a page for our mobile app.

And the mobile app is called Mil Ed Benefits and it really is an e-Guide, a digital guide for folks to find more information about our programs. It also offers a lot of marketing materials for folks if they want to visually learn about the program. There's a lot of flyers that you can download, and you can also find DANTES on all of the social media platforms.

**Bruce Moody:**

Absolutely. Erin Roberts, always great to have you on the podcast. Thank you so much.

**Erin Roberts:**

Yeah, this was great. Thank you again so much.

**Bruce Moody:**

Our pleasure. And I want to remind you that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We always like to hear from you. Click on the link in the program notes, send us a question, a comment, maybe an idea for a future episode. And be sure to subscribe to this podcast wherever you listen to your podcasts because we cover a wide range of topics to help military families navigate military life. I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.