

[H.A.S.C. No. 111-178]

**A QUESTION OF QUALITY AND VALUE:
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OVERSIGHT
OF TUITION ASSISTANCE USED FOR
DISTANCE LEARNING AND FOR-PROFIT
COLLEGES**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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**A QUESTION OF QUALITY AND VALUE: DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE OVERSIGHT OF TUITION ASSISTANCE USED
FOR DISTANCE LEARNING AND FOR-PROFIT COL-
LEGES**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 22, 2010.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 8:04 a.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Vic Snyder (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VIC SNYDER, A REPRESENTA-
TIVE FROM ARKANSAS, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS**

Dr. SNYDER. Good morning, and welcome to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing on the Defense Department's oversight of the quality of college education programs available to active duty servicemembers.

I understand there are many representatives in attendance here today from the National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services and others interested in college education for military members.

Since World War II, the Department of Defense has offered servicemembers opportunities to pursue a college education during off-duty time. Education is important to servicemembers and is often identified as a key factor in recruiting and retention. Also, in today's complex national security environment, a more highly educated force is important for the military and its ability to carry out missions. Congress is supportive of these kinds of programs.

Traditionally, the Defense Department has provided opportunities by, one, allowing qualified colleges and universities to establish programs on military installations and, two, providing tuition assistance funding to help members afford the cost. Participation in the program has remained high for many years. In fiscal year 2010, the Services programmed about \$580 million for tuition assistance, and even with high operations tempo and deployments, more than 380,000 servicemembers will use tuition assistance.

Over the past decade, however, there has been a dramatic shift in the way in which college programs are provided to military personnel. Colleges are still an important presence on military installations, but distance learning has recently become the predominant method of taking courses. Approximately 70 percent of tuition assistance goes to distance learning. Distance learning provides military personnel flexibility and portability. With a laptop and access

to the Internet, courses can be taken virtually anywhere and any-time.

There has also been a proliferation of for-profit colleges which cater to military students. DOD estimates that more than 40 percent of its tuition assistance now goes to these for-profit schools. While most for-profit colleges adhere to the same standards as non-profit and public schools, a variety of government and public interest organizations have raised concerns that some provide a lower quality of education, use overly aggressive marketing and recruiting practices, and have poor student outcomes.

DOD and the Services have had policies and processes in place to manage and oversee voluntary education programs for many years. However, the structure that exists is largely oriented towards college programs located on military installations. Since 2005, DOD and the Services have recognized the need to adapt their management and oversight structure to include distance learning programs, but progress has been slow.

The purpose of this hearing is to examine how the military's voluntary college education programs have evolved over time and learn what steps DOD and the Services are planning to oversee the emergence of distance learning and for-profit schools, and when. Ultimately, the subcommittee wants to ensure that military servicemembers are receiving a quality education for the resources invested in these programs and to determine if Congress can help.

Mr. Wittman commutes in from Virginia, and we understand he has hit some traffic this morning and will be delayed.

Mr. Jones, I will be glad to recognize you for any opening comments you may want to make.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, I will be very brief. I want to hear from each of the witnesses.

I want to thank you. I have three bases in my district. This is becoming an issue and I want to thank you and the staff. We need to look seriously at the quality of education for our men and women in uniform, and that is why I am here. And I look forward to hearing our witnesses, and I will have questions.

Mr. Chairman, since Mr. Wittman cannot be here, I ask unanimous consent that his statement be put in the record.

Dr. SNYDER. Yes, without objection.

We will also give him an opportunity to make a statement when he arrives.

Our witnesses today are Mr. Robert L. Gordon, III, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy; Mr. Anthony Stamilio—is that the correct pronunciation, “Stamilio”?

Secretary STAMILIO. “Stamilio.”

Dr. SNYDER [continuing]. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civilian Personnel and Quality of Life; Mr. Scott Lutterloh, Director, Total Force Training and Education Division, U.S. Navy; Mr. Dan Sitterly, Director of Force Development, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel, U.S. Air Force; and Mr. Timothy Larsen, Director, Personal and Family Readiness Division, U.S. Marine Corps.

We appreciate you all being here. Your written statements will be made part of the record.

Since we don't have votes until six o'clock tonight, we are not anticipating any interruptions. But we will turn the clock on, and so the light will go on at the end of five minutes. Don't feel like it is a hard stop if you have other things you need to tell us, but just to give you an idea where you are at.

So we will begin with Mr. Gordon and go right down the line.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT L. GORDON III, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY, OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (PERSONNEL AND READINESS)

Secretary GORDON. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Snyder, Representative Jones, distinguished members of the subcommittee, the Secretary of Defense and the men and women of the Armed Forces, as well as their families and I thank you for your support. My role today is to focus on what the Department is doing to provide lifelong learning opportunities through our off-duty volunteer education programs.

I am humbled to know that we are continuing the vision of our first President, George Washington, who began the first voluntary education program in 1778 when he directed his chaplain to provide reading, writing, and arithmetic instruction to his soldiers while encamped at Valley Forge. He recognized the importance of literacy and instilling the quest of lifelong learning in our nation's citizens, which is as important today as it was over two hundred years ago.

Each year, a third of our servicemembers enroll in post-secondary education courses, leading to associate's, bachelor's, and advanced degrees. This past year alone, there were more than 834,000 course enrollments, and over 46,000 servicemembers earned degrees and certifications. For the past two years, we have held graduation ceremonies in Iraq and Afghanistan for 432 servicemembers.

Servicemembers enrolled in voluntary education programs are non-traditional students, as we know. They attend school during off-duty and part-time, taking one or two classes per term. When the military mission, deployments, transfers, or family obligations impinge upon the continuation of education, this can result in an interruption of studies and breaks of months or even years between taking courses and completing degrees.

The military is keeping pace with the civilian Millennial Generation's expectations to access information through technology. To facilitate education in today's high-operations-tempo environment, colleges and universities deliver classroom instruction via the Internet and on military installations around the world. There are no geographical confines. Courses are offered aboard ships, submarines, and at deployed locations.

All for-profit, non-profit, and public post-secondary institutions participating in military tuition assistance programs must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Also, colleges and universities on our installations adhere to additional criteria set by commanders.

To support these efforts, the Department contracted with the American Council on Education to develop a process called the

Military Installation Voluntary Education Review, or MIVER, which provides a third-party, independent review of our on-installation programs.

DOD is proactively striving to ensure quality of our education programs by implementing a new policy currently on the Federal Register for public review. The policy states that every institution participating in the tuition assistance program will have a memorandum of understanding with the Department, which includes an agreement to participate in the MIVER process.

The Department provides incentives for recruitment, readiness, and retention of the total force. One of the reasons recruits join the military, as we know, is because of educational opportunities, and they remain because of them.

For example, retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant Eric Combs entered the military with a GED, earned his Community College of the Air Force associate's degree and his bachelor's degree with tuition assistance, then went on to participate in the Troops to Teachers Program. In 2005, he was selected as the Ohio teacher of the year and is now a principal in the public school system. The skills he earned while serving in the Air Force had no boundaries. Our nation benefited in the long run and continues to benefit.

Thank you again for your support of military families and our military servicemembers. None of this could have been possible without congressional support and funding designated for off-duty and voluntary education.

I will be happy to respond to any questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Gordon can be found in the Appendix on page 33.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

Mr. Stamilio.

STATEMENT OF ANTHONY J. STAMILIO, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AND QUALITY OF LIFE, U.S. ARMY

Secretary STAMILIO. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Jones, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the Army's voluntary education programs and Services which afford lifelong learning opportunities for soldiers and their families. The knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired from such opportunities help to sustain the all-volunteer force and assist the Army in retaining its position as the world's premier land force. As a result of their educational experiences, soldiers become better critical thinkers and decisionmakers, which is absolutely vital to success in the world today, both on and off the battlefield.

Army VOLED [voluntary education] programs cover the education spectrum, beginning with basic skills, professional certificates, associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees, meeting soldiers where they are, allowing soldiers to learn as they choose, thereby educating them for the Army's present and future needs. The Army has consistently maintained voluntary education as a priority by fully funding the tuition assistance program and executing the program in accordance with the Department's uniform tuition assistance policy.

The Army commitment to voluntary education extends to the theater of operation. We have education centers, counseling staff, and classroom instruction that is ongoing in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Despite the high operational tempo of the past nine years, soldier participation in education programs, especially college programs, continues to grow. During the past two years alone, Army college course enrollments have increased nine percent. To date this fiscal year, nearly 250,000 Army active, reserve, and National Guard soldiers have enrolled in over 500,000 courses at 2,500 institutions across the nation.

Even more telling is the growth in soldier participation in distance learning and online courses. In fiscal year 2005, our enrollments were about evenly split between the traditional classroom and online courses. This year to date, more than 76 percent of all of our enrollments have been in online courses.

Clearly, access to quality courses online enables our warfighters to continue their progress toward degree completion, regardless of deployment, duty location, work schedule, or other commitments. In fiscal year 2009, over 4,000 soldiers received post-secondary education degrees. That number has climbed to 4,500 so far this year in 2010.

We have in place a robust oversight program, beginning with the over 200 members of our education center staffs, that are required to provide information and counseling to soldiers even before they apply for tuition assistance.

The GoArmyEd Portal is the Army's virtual gateway for soldiers to request educational services and obtain tuition assistance anytime or anywhere. Our education counselors use the portal to track soldier progress and institution performance, respond to issues and complaints, and provide virtual educational counseling 24/7 around the globe.

Additionally, our partnership with Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, SOC, is critical to monitor the performance of our academic partner institutions, including for-profit schools, to ensure they comply with established SOC guidelines and principles.

In conclusion, we are confident that our VOLED program provides every soldier the opportunity to first identify and then meet their professional and personal educational goals. The Army provides a balanced approach that enables success on the job and in the college arena, helping to ensure soldiers are fully prepared to meet the challenges in the global environment.

We thank you for your continued support of Army Continuing Education Programs, and I would be happy to respond to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Stamilio can be found in the Appendix on page 42.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

Mr. Lutterloh.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT LUTTERLOH, DIRECTOR, TOTAL FORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION DIVISION, U.S. NAVY

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Thank you, Chairman Snyder, Representative Jones, and distinguished members of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. I am honored to have the opportunity to ap-

pear before you today to discuss the Navy's approach to voluntary education. Our success is only possible through your continued support, and we are deeply appreciative.

We are very proud of the program, which is comprised of two key components: tuition assistance and the Navy College Program for Afloat College Education, or NCPACE.

Tuition assistance offers funding to sailors to attend courses from accredited institutions, providing up to \$250 per credit hour. NCPACE is a Navy-specific program providing similar opportunities to our sailors at sea. Nearly 60,000 sailors and 4,000 officers participated in these two programs in fiscal year 2009.

Program benefits are managed consistent with the individual sailor's need to balance the pursuit of education with other professional development priorities, such as mastery of rating skills, attainment of warfare qualifications, and progressive refinement of leadership skills.

We have very effectively leveraged our investment in VOLED through memberships and associations, such as the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges and the American Council on Education. Through these programs, sailors are best positioned to successfully overcome challenges to degree completion, gain complete transferability of college credit, and maximize the educational value of their military training and operational experience, while doing so within the funding limits of our programs.

Recognizing the advancing technological and communication skills of our force and leveraging our solid foundation and advancements in distance learning, we established the Navy College Program Distance Learning Partners. These partners develop rating-relevant associate and bachelor degree programs for the 72 ratings and numerous career fields used by our enlisted sailors worldwide. Partners agree to keep residency requirements at a minimum and transfer credits from other regionally accredited institutions, while striving to remain within the DOD-established cap of \$250 per credit hour.

In 2007, we established Enlisted Learning and Development Career Roadmaps, integrating all learning, whether obtained from training, education, or experience, across a career. These roadmaps lay the foundation for sailor success in each rating.

In the case of the Legalman rating, we have advanced the integration of training and education to the point where an associate degree in paralegal studies from an American Bar Association-accredited institution is now granted at completion of the accession development process and is part of the job requirement. Educational opportunities like this offer potential to offset paths traditionally performed by officers.

We strive to ensure that every sailor who elects to enroll in off-duty education courses has a positive learning experience and satisfactorily completes those courses, regardless of duty assignment. We are proud that we have provided sailors a means to complete their degrees, regardless of location, and to offer options that maximize their credits through training and job experience.

We are confident that our voluntary education program provides every sailor the opportunity to take college courses in an environment where success is the norm. We provide a balanced approach

that ensures success as a professional mariner and achievement of all their college goals.

On behalf of the chief of naval operations, Admiral Roughead, and our entire Navy, I thank you for your continuing support for the professional development of this fine force.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lutterloh can be found in the Appendix on page 52.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

Mr. Sitterly.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL R. SITTERLY, DIRECTOR OF FORCE DEVELOPMENT, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL, U.S. AIR FORCE

Mr. SITTERLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman Jones, Dr. Fenner, for the opportunity to discuss college education opportunities and the quality of education available to airmen.

We face extraordinary challenges today, from growing our economy to transforming our energy supply, improving our children's education, safeguarding our nation, and more. We pride ourselves in promoting a culture of lifelong learning not only as a way to attract and develop diverse top talent but as a way to enhance our airmen's military careers. In fact, we can map the voluntary education courses our airmen take directly to our Air Force institutional competencies. Simply put, voluntary education has a direct mission impact. Equally important, we return our airmen to society and to the nation better prepared to face the extraordinary challenges I mentioned.

Every Air Force base has an education and training office where airmen are counseled on military and civilian education. Each office also provides a college-level examination program that enables airmen to take advantage of lifelong learning and possibly shorten degree completion time. In addition, the Air Force Voluntary Education Center is an online resource tool.

Air Force policy regarding military tuition assistance receives its authority from Title 10 and policy guidance from DOD instructions. In fiscal year 2003, the Air Force implemented the DOD military tuition assistance uniform caps and ceilings, resulting in a 44 percent increase in enrollments. Even with decreased Air Force end-strength and increased operations tempo, the number of enrollments has remained relatively stable.

One reason, as Dr. Snyder pointed out, is the high participation rate in the ever-growing distance-learning delivery methods of education. This allows airmen with demanding work schedules and frequent moves and deployments to learn and to progress toward degree completion more easily.

When it comes to quality, the key decision point for authorization of tuition assistance is the accreditation of the school. If the school is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Department of Education, tuition assistance can be authorized when other eligibility is met.

Air Force policy provides specific guidance regarding access to Air Force bases by school representatives. Specifically, guidelines impacting the voluntary education community are in an Air Force instruction on commercial solicitation on DOD installations. The

Air Force has a policy of neutrality regarding schools. We neither endorse nor discount any accredited school. The diversity of thought that comes from learning across a wide range of schools is valued. Ultimately, the airman, with proper counseling and degree planning, makes the final decision of the specific school and program to pursue.

The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), my alma mater, is the jewel of the Air Force education opportunities for enlisted personnel. It is a regionally accredited school, and 75 percent of the degree can be earned through Air Force training. Twenty-five percent needs to be earned from an accredited civilian college. Each year, more than 1.6 million credit-hours are awarded through the Community College of the Air Force, and more than 335,000 airmen have graduated from the Community College of the Air Force. Many airmen are able to transfer CCAF [Community College of the Air Force] credits toward civilian college bachelor degrees.

Quality education is a valued part of our Air Force culture. You heard from Mr. Gordon about Sergeant Combs, the Ohio teacher of the year. We have hundreds of similar success stories. NASA astrophysicist Dr. Richard Barry and Arthur Tyler, former president of Sacramento City College and now the COO of the Houston, Texas Community College system, are both former airmen and CCAF graduates.

Any small successes I might have enjoyed in my 34 years in the Air Force is because of tuition assistance and a very motivated, dedicated, and perhaps persistent education services officer, Mr. Neil Parasot from Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana. He mentored me through eight colleges and universities, some non-profit, some for-profit, some public, including the Community College of the Air Force, and 15 hours of distance learning on the way to a master's degree in education, all using military tuition assistance.

Looking back, I suppose the quality of the eight schools did differ, depending on how one measures quality. But the real measure of my learning was probably more closely aligned to my effort, my concentration, my focus, my commitment, and the goals at the time that I took each of these classes.

Our airmen are committed to learning. The culture of education and the passion for learning comes from the many Neil Parasots; Anne Smith, who is here with me today; the Jeff Allens ; the Shelly Owczarskis; and our Air Force education offices around the world today.

Airmen do have more education options than ever before. The Air Force believes that personal and professional growth through collegiate programs is essential and beneficial to the Air Force mission and the nation. I have an obligation to educate our airmen about all of the options that they can make, so that they can make a wise and informed choice of schools and degree programs and to assure that every airman receives the best education possible for the time, effort, and resources that they and our nation invest.

As the education landscape continues to change, we must continue to partner with you, with the Department of Education, and

with America's educational institutions and others to make sure that we have this right.

Thank you for the opportunity to work together. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sitterly can be found in the Appendix on page 57.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

Mr. Larsen.

STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY R. LARSEN, DIRECTOR, PERSONAL AND FAMILY READINESS DIVISION, MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, U.S. MARINE CORPS

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Snyder, Representative Jones, thank you for the interest in the military tuition assistance program and the quality of education opportunities for marines. It is my privilege today to represent the Commandant of the Marine Corps to discuss this important issue.

Education opportunities are extremely valuable in growing and maintaining the high quality of the Marine Corps. Tuition assistance has a profound impact through the lifecycle of a marine: from recruiting, where it is an incentive to assist in the enlistment process; through career progression, to things like discriminators for promotion of enlisted marines, and to the reintegration to civilian life, to assist in preparing marines for life beyond the Marine Corps.

Our goal is for every marine to have a quality education experience, and there are three elements to that. The first is a partnership between the student and the institution. The student must be committed to the pursuit of education. The second is relying on the Department of Education to ensure institutions meet accreditation standards. And third, the Marine Corps is focused on student success, particularly new students.

Before tuition assistance is authorized, a mandatory College 101 brief and an initial counseling session with a qualified counselor occur. Eligibility for first time tuition assistance is based on their general technical skills score. A GT [general technical] of 100 or higher authorizes them to use the program. Scoring 99 or below, we refer people to an academic skills enhancement program to prepare them for college-level work. Once they achieve a minimum standard, they are allowed to use tuition assistance.

And the program has been very effective and has achieved very positive results for new students. About 82 percent of the Marines successfully complete their first course. And a request for waivers due to failure or incomplete coursework decreased about 40 percent, from about 1,100 in 2005 to about 700 in 2009.

Protecting marines from aggressive marketing is important to unit commanders. The installation commanders have the primary responsibility, and they take that responsibility very seriously. Issues that are raised are given a critical review, and then, if warranted, a local IG investigation is conducted.

What is important is the opportunity for marines to opt out of the program or unsubscribe when they are no longer interested in the program.

We appreciate the subcommittee's interest in tuition assistance and quality education opportunities for marines, and we look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Larsen can be found in the Appendix on page 66.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you all for your testimony.

We will put ourselves on the five-minute clock here. And we will do several rounds, I think, before the morning is over.

Who is controlling the clock here, Dr. Fenner? There you go.

Is there more to the fairly rapid increase in online learning than just convenience? Are there any factors out there that concern you that it may be more than convenience, in terms of quality issues of the education?

Maybe we will start with you, Mr. Larsen, and just go the other way this time.

Mr. LARSEN. I would offer that many times for-profit institutions would probably market themselves very well. We don't discriminate between any of the types of either for-profit, non-profit, or traditional institutions. As long as they are accredited, we support marines participating in those programs. But I would offer that, if it is a for-profit institution, they are probably very interested in marketing themselves.

Dr. SNYDER. No, I wasn't asking about for-profit versus not-for-profit. I was asking about online learning—

Mr. LARSEN. Oh, I am sorry.

Dr. SNYDER [continuing]. Because traditional schools do offer online distance learning also.

Mr. LARSEN. Right. We actually have about 25 percent of our students in traditional schools and the rest of them are in distance learning programs.

So I think just the convenience, as you said before, and the flexibility it gives the student to participate in the program, particularly when they are deployed, allow them the latitude to make the course fit to their schedule or when they are available.

Dr. SNYDER. Anybody have anything else to add to that?

Yes, Mr. Gordon.

Secretary GORDON. Actually, I do.

You know, this is the Millennial Generation. I think our force is really a reflection of our larger society. And we have Millennials who look at this, I think, not only in terms of convenience but in terms of comfort. They are very comfortable with consuming education in a different sort of environment. I taught at the Academy, the Military Academy, for about 11 years. And I was thinking back, in terms of our 40 courses, 50 to 55 minutes per class, we had a structure, and that is how we teach our cadets. Things have changed in terms of this younger generation now, which is much more comfortable in a different sort of space.

I think the other thing is education is becoming student-centric. You know, our education heretofore has been very focused on our curricula and how we then instructed in class. And with student-centric education, students can go at different speeds.

So I think it does go beyond convenience because of, first of all, the technology, but also the generation is much more used to con-

suming education and other different sorts of phenomena on the Internet and online.

Dr. SNYDER. But you don't see any potential downsides?

Secretary GORDON. Well, one of the keys, I think for our business is ensuring that we have got systems in place to both monitor and oversee it and ensure a quality education for our servicemembers. And I think the first step to that is what we have been doing in the past, which is ensuring that any institution, whether they be online or brick-and-mortar, be accredited by the Department of Education.

One of the differences today, though, is we used to have the MIVER process, which was Military Installation Voluntary Education Reviews. And what is up for public comment now is MVER, but we took the "installation" out. So the key now is a review process that will include not only those educational institutions on our posts and bases across the world but also online institutions and off-base institutions, as well. It is key.

Dr. SNYDER. We had a lot of discussion about the size of the defense budget, always looking for savings. And we are all in agreement with that.

Where are you at with—well, maybe we will start with you, Mr. Gordon—for generally each Service, what is the number of your counselors and your funding for education counselors? Where has it been over the last several years and where do you see it going in the future, in terms of the numbers? Have there been reductions?

Secretary GORDON. Good question. I think we still need our counselors on our facilities and our installations across the country. But, as some of my colleagues mentioned as well, more online counseling is available. The perfect example is our Military OneSource system, where our servicemembers can go and our family members can go to get some counseling, basically, on things such as education.

But I think it is absolutely essential that we have the face-to-face counseling, as well, on our installations. The advantage, of course, to face-to-face is also those counselors on installations have the records of our servicemembers. So, while we can start and we will see, I think, an increase of online counseling services available, face-to-face is still very important. And I think we need to be consistent with that.

And I would like my colleagues to comment.

Secretary STAMILIO. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, when the Army launched the GoArmyEd Portal, it provided an opportunity to free up the education center staffs from a bunch of administrative duty. As a result of that, the Army took the opportunity to reduce the overall education center staffing somewhat. We probably went, perhaps, a little far in that regard, because our educational staff—education center staff is stretched right now. We still have coverage.

But we have come to reaffirm the commitment that face-to-face counseling is absolutely important. And we are working within the Army to figure out how best to restore the right balance between automation, efficiency, and face-to-face counseling for our servicemembers.

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. Actually, both questions, I think, are pretty important.

I would like to just go back for a second. While I agree with my colleagues, I would like to add that what we are focused on primarily is sailor success. And that comes to pass in several different measures.

First off, I would like them to successfully complete that course. So we insist that they all have a college plan and that they all talk to a counselor, whether that be face to face or over the phone, before they engage in any educational opportunity. We have laid in some requirements for them to have completed some of their professional work before they embark on an education plan. We want them to successfully complete that course.

Relative to distance learning, the initial indications are that the completion rates for traditional learning, traditional education in a brick-and-mortar schoolhouse, are a little bit higher, about 90 percent, compared to the lower number in distance learning, 80 percent. We are still trying to understand exactly what that means, but that is one of the things that we look at and try and measure to understand the effectiveness of those programs.

Dr. SNYDER. Would you repeat that for me again? Ninety—

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Roughly 90 percent for our enlisted undergraduate degree programs, about 90 percent of our enlisted sailors, are completing those courses. It is roughly 80 percent for distance learning. So we see a little bit of a difference initially in the numbers that we are measuring there. So we are keeping a pretty close eye on that to understand how that happens.

Again, regarding success, another measure is transferability. We want sailors to be able to get their associate degree and go on to a bachelor's degree, transferring all of those credits that they have engaged in for their associate degree at the bachelor level and beyond that. So accredited institutions are important to us.

Those are a couple of the measures that we have.

We have carefully reviewed our counseling staff across the nation and around the world, keeping in mind that technology has advanced over the last decade or so to the point that virtual counseling is now well within the realm of possibility. We have established just this past year the Navy's first virtual education counseling center. Twenty-seven employees, split between education technicians, who are there to make sure all of the records are kept current, and eight counselors, who operate from 6:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night, offering counseling services to sailors around the world.

That workload is picking up. We have about—we average about 150 counseling sessions per week. And that is keeping up. We have in-sourced our contractor workforce to civilians, so we are moving those contractors into the government service at our Navy college offices around the world.

Mr. SITTERLY. Thank you, Dr. Snyder. I would also like to respond to the distance learning question for just a moment.

In fact, we in the Air Force have embraced that in our own professional military education courses, recognizing that that is sort of what the Millennials are looking for. And our educational outcomes can be very closely measured to success.

For instance, at Air University, we now have an online master's program that we offer, accredited with the rest of our Air University courses. By law, our first-time supervisors for civilians are required to do first-time supervisory training. That is offered online with a facilitator around the world through Air University. We find that that gives us a very standardized opportunity versus having different people address it differently. We ensure that all of our civilian supervisors get that same quality of education.

That said, I don't know that I would want to go see a physician who only has ever done distance-learning schools. So I think there are some opportunities to do things the traditional way. But most of our students that are enrolled in voluntary education are taking business degrees, management degrees, computers, and psychology. And I am comfortable that the quality of that education through accredited schools is very high.

The counselors—we do have 82 education offices throughout the Air Force, and we have two or three counselors at each installation, depending upon the size. And we have taken some reductions, but we have offset that with our online voluntary education office, as well. And then we can synergize with the Community College of the Air Force, so if they have specific questions, once they get the degree, then they can call into the Community College of the Air Force to get direction there, as well.

So I think we are doing fine.

Dr. SNYDER. Any further comments?

Mr. Larsen.

Mr. LARSEN. Yes, sir. Regarding counselors, you know, they are very important to us. We have counselors at every one of our installations.

I would offer that about 60 percent of our participation in the program is the junior enlisted marines. And those people, many of them are getting out at the end of their initial enlistment and not making the Marine Corps a career. So those people—it is very important to connect with them, to make sure they have a good experience and make sure that they are prepared for college-level work.

They are the preponderance of the work that is done by the counselors. And every one of those individuals, when they begin the program, have a face-to-face counseling session with a counselor that lasts for about an hour. So—

Dr. SNYDER. I apologize for my coughing here.

It would probably be helpful—let's take it as a question for the record—to see the numbers and your evaluation of the number of counselors and availability of counseling, online or however you do it, over the last several years and as you go forward.

Mr. Jones.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

And, gentlemen, thank you for your presentation.

I would like to start my question with a statement and a reading from Bloomberg Business Week, "For-Profit Colleges Targeting the Military." Let me start here. "Some Active Duty personnel can earn an associate degree, which typically takes two years of study, in five weeks."

I am just going to throw out two or three points, and I would like for you to respond.

“Three—American Military University, Phoenix, and closely held Grantham—charge \$250 a credit, or \$750 a course, which allowed them to receive the maximum reimbursement by U.S. taxpayers without servicemembers having to pay any out-of-pocket tuition. Publicly funded community colleges offer classes on military bases for as little as \$50 a credit.”

As the chairman said, we are in a terrible financial situation as a nation. And there are many aspects to government. That we all know.

I have had the opportunity to talk to several people in the Third District of North Carolina. And we know that the military deserves every opportunity that the taxpayer can give him or her, especially in education. But when you see articles like the one in Bloomberg—and Wall Street Journal has done a couple, I think—it does not help the program, because the taxpayer who is picking up the bill is looking at this and saying, “Is the soldier getting equal education?” If he or she can get education at a community college that offers courses for \$50 versus a for-profit university that is charging \$250 and \$750, then something is not right.

My question to start is, how do you keep the good and weed out the bad? Where is that check and balance that they report to you or to DOD, Mr. Gordon? How can the taxpayer be assured that the military is getting a quality education and really not an education in being taken advantage of?

Secretary GORDON. Thank you, sir, for allowing me to respond to that. It is a very good question.

I think, first of all, we have to ensure that we adhere to the accreditation process, and we do. I did see that article and read it. It made me think about, first of all, accreditation. And we do; we adhere to the accreditation process. So what we do is we ensure, regardless of the type of educational institution, that they are accredited by the Department of Education.

The second piece is oversight, I think. And we had the MIVER process. We are changing that. That MIVER process was focused on the educational institutions on installations, and we are expanding that now. And our expectation is, if successful, we will be able to use that basically to review and monitor and oversee these educational institutions, regardless if they are online, off-post, or on-post.

Now, the MIVER process is a process where—it is run by the American Council on Education. They will send four to five, basically, members in to take a look at curricula. They will take a look at teachers. They will conduct interviews with commanders and with students.

So I think, by expanding that process to all institutions, we will assist once again in ensuring a quality education. Because it gets down to quality, first of all, but also adaptiveness, I think. You know, we have a very mobile workforce. That is in society writ large. Multiple deployments, of course, occur in the military Services now.

And I understand what you are saying about the \$50 versus \$250, but at the same time, having the sort of flexibility and agility in a system where individuals can have a choice among a menu of different types of academic institutions that really do suit them

and will end up eventually in an education for them, where they can complete it, I think that is absolutely key.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Gordon, that has been one of the problems with education, is that—I am talking about not the military—instead of giving the child the challenge along the way to the 12th grade, if we have made it easy for him or her, then when they get that high school diploma, it doesn't have the quality because the person really was not challenged to receive that.

I appreciate your comment about, you know, more oversight and trying to weed out, I guess, the good and the bad, if I could phrase it that way. But the American Council on Education that will—that does report back, how many universities, online or not online, just not-for-profit, have been delisted in the last five or six years?

Secretary GORDON. Good question. I do not know the answer to that.

I don't know if the Services know, delisting at all?

I don't know. We will have to—I will have to get back to you on that.

Mr. JONES. Well, I wish, Mr. Chairman, we would get that for the record because I think that will tell us a whole lot. And again, I have great respect for the military. But we need to know for the taxpayer and the military that those universities that are in it just to make money from the taxpayer and not give the quality education, that they don't exist any longer, as it relates to the military.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 79.]

Mr. JONES. I will yield back at this time.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Jones.

The issue of for-profit schools, this full committee and this subcommittee are not trying to solve and will not solve this whole issue of for-profit versus not-for-profit schools or private colleges. That is not what we are about. We are talking here about how you all provide oversight of the substantial amount of money that is going to your military personnel and making sure they are getting what they want out of it, and your help. So that is what angle we are coming from.

But in terms of looking at quality, following on what Mr. Jones talked about, I don't think we have good employability numbers, but my guess is you couldn't really tell us, well we had a higher officer promotion rate if somebody went to a for-profit school versus a non-profit or private college, you know, down the road, or versus online. I mean, I suspect you don't have the ability of throwing out any numbers in terms of employability. In the private sector, that can be hard to get at, too.

But in terms of loan default rates, there are some numbers there. In 2009, students, within three years after leaving for-profit schools, that had an associate degree had a default rate of about 23 percent, compared to 15 percent at a public or non-profit school. And when you look at students at for-profit schools that offered a bachelor's or higher degree, they had a default rate of about 18 percent, compared to 6 percent from public or private schools.

Now, I don't know exactly what all that means, but I think it means we ought to be asking some questions. What it says is, in the private sector, the non-military world, is that, for whatever rea-

sons, the students that are going to for-profit schools for an associate degree and the higher degree levels are ending up with higher default rates. And one implication could be they are not making as much money, that their investment was higher than the payoff for it.

But those are,—in addition to anecdotal stuff, I mean, some of the things that concern us as we see this fairly rapid increase in the amount of money, federal dollars, that is going to for-profit schools.

Do any of you have any comment about the default rate issue? Maybe that is not anything you have thought about.

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Thank you, Chairman Snyder. It is an interesting question.

And our Navy college offices, in particular our counselors, are there to counsel sailors in the development of an education plan that does not depend on loans. So we are counseling them and directing them to colleges and universities accredited by the Department of Education who are in our consortiums, more often than not, and who are offering courses, fully accredited, fully transferable, to these sailors within the constraints of the tuition assistance limits that we have.

So, in my view, sailors should not be embarking in loans. So I don't have data that would indicate default rates on these loans.

Dr. SNYDER. No, I recognize that. But that is not the issue. The issue is, why is there a higher default rate in the private sector for for-profit schools? Does it imply that there is something qualitatively different with the quality of product that these mostly young people are ending up with? That is the issue.

And my guess, as I said before, that you can't analyze officer promotion rates, for example, and say, oh, we are seeing that the for-profit schools are doing better than the not-for-profit schools. I think that would be tough for you, other than anecdotally. But there is information out there that says maybe we ought to be looking at this, maybe the quality isn't as good.

I think I will curtail my time here. I notice we have been joined by Mr. Wittman, who survived yet another commute. In fairness to Mr. Wittman, there is really not a lot that goes on in this town at eight o'clock in the morning, and so he doesn't have to get going this early very often. He is one of those few blessed Members that gets to live at home.

Mr. Wittman, if you would like to do your opening statement, you are welcome to. We will give you as much time as you want right now. Or if you just want to progress to some questions, whatever you would like to do.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, folks, thank you so much for joining us today. And I am sure you have been quizzed on a number of these issues, so I hope that my questions aren't going to be repetitive.

But, you know, in looking at this whole scope of issues that our men and women in uniform are dealing with, obviously we want them to be pursuing higher levels of education. We also want to make sure that it is convenient to their deployment schedules.

So, trying to mix that in with all of the other issues here and making sure that what they are paying for is truly the value that they are getting and that that value translates through their ca-

reers, I am just going to ask you in general: Do you see the current opportunities in distance learning and integrating that in with deployment schedules to make sure that our men and women in uniform get those educational opportunities?

Do you think the current system is doing all that it can to do two things: to make sure that our men and women have access and, secondly, to make sure that they are getting maximum value for the opportunities that are out there?

And, Mr. Lutterloh, I will begin with you.

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Thank you, Congressman Wittman.

I think the distance learning offers tremendous access. And, judging by the numbers, the increased utilization of distance learning in the force, I would say there is some value, from the sailor's perspective. Whether or not that is providing maximum value is very difficult for me to tell.

The value—when I talk to sailors, the value that they get out of education is, more often than not, linked to degree completion. A degree from an accredited institution is what they are looking for, more often than not. It gives them greater range of job opportunity if they are to get out of the Service. It means more money in their salary, more than likely, in the future. All of these things are of value to the sailor.

So I would say a degree from an accredited university is the value that they are looking for. And, judging by the fact that all of our courses and institutions are accredited by the Department of Education, I would say that there is quite a bit of a foundational value to those sailors.

When we get into the value of the content, the curricula, depending on where that sailor is in his or her life, what kind of pressures they have on them, how eager to learn they are, how much time they are able to put into that, I would say some of that impinges on the value, as well.

But I couldn't comment on the content value other than to say they are accredited or not by the Department of Education.

Mr. SITTERLY. Thank you, Congressman.

And I agree. Access, absolutely, everyone has it, as indicated by the number of folks taking distance-learning courses, upwards of 70 percent for us now, with military tuition assistance, as well.

Also, in those rare cases where an airman doesn't have access perhaps to a laptop to get an online course, we can do streaming video. There are other distance-learning opportunities, you know, "box of books" that Chairman Snyder loves so much in our PME [professional military education] schools.

But distance learning comes in many forms. And so, absolutely, yes.

And I think the goal of accreditation, of course, is to ensure that the education provided meets a level of acceptance. And the Department of Education recognizes certain accrediting institutions that have the ability to evaluate those schools. And so, I think, to the degree that the rigor and the discipline of those agencies is acceptable, then I feel that our airmen get a quality and valued education, as well.

I did want to go back, if I may, sir—and I recognize I am on your time—to Congressman Jones's point. And, sir, I recognize the cost,

and I see your point exactly. But I did want to make the point that we do have a cap on the annual amount of tuition assistance that a military member can take. So, even though the semester hours might be more expensive—and they are capped. We have a \$4,500-per-year maximum that a military person can use.

So, when I was using my military tuition assistance, I sort of shopped around and got a little more aggressive toward finishing my degree. So I looked for a cheaper school, so I didn't exceed the cap—the caps back then were, obviously, a lot less. So there is a little bit of that, as well, sir.

Mr. LARSEN. Yes, sir. The short answer is, in the Marine Corps, not all of those that want to participate in the tuition assistance program get the opportunity, primarily for operational reasons or OPTEMPO [operations tempo] deployments.

Being a former recruiting station commander, I would tell you that, if not the number-one reason, one of the very most important reasons why people join the military and join the Marine Corps is for off-duty education, the opportunity to participate in that. They don't all get that because of the deployment schedule right now, but I would offer that there is somewhere around 31,000 marines that are participating in tuition assistance right now.

If you look at those that get off active duty, there is about 55,000 of them, or about that number, that are participating in the Montgomery GI Bill, which tells me that there is a lot more that would participate in tuition assistance if the opportunity were there.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Gordon.

Secretary GORDON. Thank you, Congressman Wittman.

I agree with my colleagues. I think, first of all, when we take a look at distance learning, you know, it is the delivery of education and training through electronic media, mediated instruction. So it is expansive. And I think what we have is the architecture, basically, in the military to provide that.

I agree with Mr. Larsen. The opportunities might not exist as much as they could in an environment where we would not have as many deployments. But we do; that is a fact of life. And I think we do have that access.

In terms of maximizing effectiveness, though, I think it behooves us to continue to be proactive in looking at how we can provide the kind of oversight to ensure a quality education. We do have the fact that, you know, these programs are accredited by the Department of Education, but we are very hopeful, with the new MIVER that I have discussed earlier, that we will have the kind of oversight we need for all of those institutions.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Stamilio.

Secretary STAMILIO. Thank you, Congressman Wittman.

Clearly, the issue of access to distance learning is absolutely vital, and 76 percent of Army enrollments are through the distance-learning mode. And that is very important to an organization as busy and as far-reaching as the United States Army. And so we certainly—our soldiers certainly take advantage of that.

In terms of the value, in the context of the overall growth of technology, as the Army has launched its integrated portal to administer the Tuition Assistance Program, it also provides soldiers an

opportunity to look at a course catalog, or actually multiple course catalogs, from the 2,500 institutions that have committed to the Army that they will administer their programs in accordance with our needs and consistent with the SOC standards. So soldiers have a wide array of opportunities that they can pursue and do some cost comparison, as well.

And so, in terms of value, we had set up the architecture in the system so that a soldier can plot out his or her collegiate future and then do the appropriate shopping, recognizing that the courses that will be taken, if he or she is choosing the right ones that are consistent with our overall program, that those courses will be transferrable. And so a soldier could have the opportunity to take a course from this institution or that institution and it would be transferrable, and maximize his or her value for the Tuition Assistance dollar. And so there are some advantages to all of this.

The other point that I would mention is, many of our in-classroom instructions—in fact, much of our in-classroom instruction relies on adjunct professors that come from the surrounding area. Now, in the case of a military base that has universities nearby, those adjunct professors are sometimes very easy to come by. In other locations, they rely on other adjunct professors. What distance learning provides is an opportunity for the institution to go find the best professor, the best instructor, and remote that instructor in a distant-learning environment. And so the potential exists, whether the institution takes advantage of it or not, but the potential exists to actually get the higher-quality instructor for the particular program that is being offered.

Thank you.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Jones.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I appreciate the answers from the panel to each, the chairman as well as the ranking member.

I want to go back and read a couple points, and then I am going to make a statement and listen to you, and then I need to leave. We are going to have a classified hearing on rules of engagement today.

Mike Shields, a retired Marine Corps colonel and human resource director of U.S. field operations for Schindler Elevator, the North American arm of the Swiss Schindler Group, says he rejects about 50 military candidates each year—50 military candidates each year—for the company's management development program. "Because their graduate degrees came from online for-profits, we don't even consider them."

That is a tragedy. I mean, this is a man, like yourselves, who has served in the military. I am sure he would rather hire a military retiree than not hire one. I don't know that because I don't know the man.

Then another comment, made I guess by a counselor: "Some of these schools prey on marines," he says. "Day and night, they call you, they e-mail you. These servicemen get caught up in that. Nobody in their family ever went to college. They don't know about college."

I hope you are asking—I guess, again, for this recommendation as to how we move forward—meaning we, the American people—

it seems like to me that we have had a system—and this does not blame anybody sitting at the table—but we have had a system that really seems like it is not as well-controlled as it needs to be. Because I cannot imagine, if I was a marine or soldier, sailor, airman, whatever, and I decided I wanted to better myself and go get online—and I don't know Phoenix University from Duke University; let's say that is the type of person, okay? And I don't know a thing about Phoenix. I just happen to see their ads all the time. That is the only reason I am using them. They might be the best in the world.

But anyway, so I decide that I am going to go—I keep getting these calls, I get these e-mails. And, you know, I am just going to take one course, that is all, from this for-profit. And then I find out, if I do complete the course, that I don't have an equal opportunity to that person that went maybe to a small school. Now, I am not talking about the big schools, but a small school.

And I hope that the Congress of next year, whomever is sitting here next year, that we will work with the Department of Defense. Because, in my humble opinion—now, I am basing a lot of this on conversation back on some of the bases that I represent. We have a situation here that the taxpayers' dollar is not being well-spent. And even more seriously than that, to me, is that person in the military is not getting a quality education. And when they get out of the military, they are going to find out that what they thought they had that would help them open a door will not open a door. That is a tragedy.

Mr. Chairman, I guess nobody is going to answer. I would just—

Secretary GORDON. I would be happy. Thank you, Congressman Jones.

You know, it is interesting, looking at society writ large right now and the emergence of online education. As I said, I read that article before—

Mr. JONES. Right.

Secretary GORDON [continuing]. And I looked at that comment, and I think you are right: We have to ensure a quality education for our servicemembers.

What we don't know right now is the degree to which our society, our commercial sector, values an online education. So I am not sure if that comment is a result of, "It was an online education; therefore, we don't hire them," or, you know, "The quality was not sufficient, and, therefore, we don't hire them." I think it is a new day, that we are still growing in terms of this online education process.

I do know that what we are better understanding is that we all learn differently, even in this room. And whether the delivery system is a brick-and-mortar system or an online system, I think, for our servicemembers, being able to map out a certain sort of educational delivery system that better matches how they learn is something we can give them and a great opportunity to do.

But, as you said, the key is ensuring that sort of quality. And I think first with accreditation, but with this change in MIVER, we can take a look at all those institutions and ensure our commanders and our installations also have a part of the process, we can ensure that quality education for our servicemembers.

Mr. JONES. Thank you.

Mr. LARSEN. Yes, sir, if I could, Congressman Jones, one of the Marine Corps installations that is in your district, we have an example of where we have one of the educational institutions that was considered not of value by the local commander. We have barred them from the base, from conducting business on-base.

So it is very difficult when you put the onus on the individual installation, on the individual education services officer to make a determination to bar somebody, and then that is done at one installation and not done across the board at other installations.

So I think we need not only to put it at the local level, but also we need to make sure that those institutions are accredited and are of value and make sure that they do provide the marine or whatever servicemember the value of education that they are looking for.

But we do have a couple of examples where we have shown that it is not of value and we have taken action to prevent them from conducting business on installations.

Mr. JONES. Good.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

Aren't there about 7,000 schools that participate somehow in the tuition assistance program? I mean, it would be a very difficult challenge to expect you all to somehow analyze all the coursework. And I am sure the departments vary from within the same school. And I think you all are having to grapple with a societal issue here on this topic, but you have a special niche.

I want to ask about the 90/10 rule, which I didn't really know much about. I thought the 90/10 rule had to do with how much a local government had to put up after a tornado to get FEMA clean-up moneys, but this is a different 90/10 rule.

But I think it was while Mr. Jones and I have been in Congress, at some point we said that, okay, let's at least say that these for-profit schools have to have at least 10 percent of their students actually pay their own money. The quality is so good there is at least 10 percent of the student body that is paying their own money. And so up to 90 percent could be title IV Federal dollars.

But here is where you all come in: military tuition assistance doesn't count in the 90 percent. It counts in the 10 percent. So—I will make this up—theoretically, there could be a school out there that has, you know, 89 percent of its students getting title IV moneys through Stafford loans or Pell Grants and 11 percent tuition assistance, so they would be 100 percent federally funded, because your students count in the private side of things.

Now, that is concerning. That is concerning because then you would have a school that every taxpayer in America is paying into, and yet they may not have any or just very, very few students that actually have looked at the quality and think it is worth me putting up my own money for.

And I don't know how we grapple with that. I guess—I don't know if that is an oversight or what, but it seems like if the 90/10 rule means anything—and maybe it doesn't; it is kind of a roundabout way of getting at quality, I think—but if it means any-

thing, then it just doesn't make any sense to me why federal military tuition assistance isn't counted as part of the 90 percent.

Do you all have any comments on that? Is that something that you all are familiar with?

It got real quiet here.

Secretary GORDON. I am not real familiar with it, but it needs to be taken a look at, yeah.

Dr. SNYDER. And, frankly, that is not your responsibility. I mean, these are issues we are dealing with that are really not the job of the Secretary of Defense to sort out or, you know, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, but they are issues that you all are involved in.

And that may be one of the reasons why you are seeing such predatory—some predatory behavior out there or what you describe, Mr. Larsen, as very aggressive techniques. It may be that, you know, some schools need to keep these numbers up, otherwise their balance is thrown off under the 90/10 rule.

The issue came back, Mr. Larsen, when we were talking about loans versus tuition assistance, and we all know—we are talking about the tuition assistance program. I remember, this was in my olden days, right after I got out of the Marine Corps. And I had dropped out of college after two years to join the Marine Corps. And while I didn't smoke, somehow I ended up with a matchbook with an offering for a heavy-equipment operator school. Sadly, I probably got it in a bar. But anyway, I ended up with this matchbook, and I called them up. And I thought, "I could drive a Road Bear."

And so, this guy calls me back right away. He gets a hold of me, and he is going to meet with me. Well, we ended up meeting, like, in the parking lot right out of a motel room. I think he was from out of town somewhere, and had come down there. There was a—it looked like a girlfriend with him. I think they thought this was going to be a big killing.

And you talk about aggressive sales techniques, I mean, he was just saying, "You know, you can always change your mind. It is not going to cost you anything." He used the phrase "Uncle Sugar" several times. "Uncle Sugar, no problem"—well, I didn't sign up for it. But later on I realized that—and this was the GI Bill—that I only had, I think, at that time, like, two opportunities to change my program. Well, if I had signed up for that and dropped out, that would have been one. So if I had decided to change my mind and not be a medical student—I mean, it was taking away an option, and yet it was like it was a free ride.

But I would have had no skin in the game. That is the difference—that is one of the differences here. I could have signed up for anything. Your tuition assistance to students, you know, whether it is \$250 or \$50, they have no skin in the game. And I don't think they should. But that does put more responsibility on you all to monitor the quality. I mean, nobody is—I suspect you don't get many complaints of people coming back and saying, "I was really hoping I would study more," you know, "I was really hoping I would have to stay up later at night and do my homework because of the rigor of the tests that were coming up."

Secretary GORDON. Uh-huh.

Dr. SNYDER. I suspect most people don't come to you and say, "We were lacking rigor."

Secretary GORDON. Well, Mr. Chairman, they actually do have skin in the game. We provide them the money for tuition, but they must provide all the support in terms of computers, books. So they do get skin in the game through the fact that we do have a tuition piece but they have to provide the other support system, basically, to take the course.

Dr. SNYDER. Well—

Secretary STAMILIO. Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would like to offer a comment with regard to that.

The Army has a program that focuses on credentialing and licensing, a program much like what you discussed off the matchbook cover. And the focus on this is for the soldier who is probably not going to pursue a bachelor's or a master's degree but needs a professional certification, perhaps as a heavy-equipment operator, perhaps as some other certificate program.

And through the Army Education Center, the soldier can come in, get the appropriate counseling, get the appropriate credit for the training that he or she already has toward this particular certification, and then links the soldier with the appropriate institutions that are fully accredited, that have the same kinds of controls as the rest of the tuition assistance program.

So it is not, "Write us a check for \$5,000, and we will send your certificate later." It provides for credit-hour checks and balances, that the education counselor can check progress, but also provides for the appropriate credit for the training that the soldier has received, with the ultimate goal for the institution, the educational institution, to fill in the gaps with that required training that will allow the soldier to get the certificate that he or she deserves.

So we have a program in place that works that—the management controls are in place so that—so it is pretty effective, in terms of both outcome and investment.

Dr. SNYDER. One comment, and it will go to Mr. Wittman.

Mr. Gordon, in response to your thoughts about books, as you know, there is no requirement that the schools charge for books. And, as you probably know, some for-profit schools waive book fees—

Secretary GORDON. Yes, I do.

Dr. SNYDER. Yeah, so—in the spirit of completeness.

Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Just one overall question. I know as these for-profit universities obviously expand into meeting this need, I think the concern is that there is a diversity of opportunities there, and if the not-profit, publicly supported institutions begin to wane in their activity in supporting our men and women pursuing degrees, if that opportunity wanes, my concern is, where does that leave us in the future? Does that actually create less access because it is getting focused into a smaller number of universities and institutions?

So I just was wondering if any of you all have a comment about how do you make sure, going into the future, that we still have the variety of opportunities, including a very robust opportunity within our public institutions for our men and women in uniform to pursue degrees there.

Mr. Gordon.

Secretary GORDON. Thanks, Congressman Wittman.

I think, you know, as I had mentioned earlier, this is a new day, with real opportunities, potentially, online with our society writ large. So, as long as that demand, I suspect, is out there, we will continue to see the expansion of those sorts of opportunities.

And I really think the key is ensuring, you know, of those sorts of academic institutions that are available, that our servicemembers have access to the ones that provide them that valued education.

You know, we have been talking a lot, I think, about almost silos of, you know, online versus brick-and-mortar, but a number of institutions have both, so that our servicemembers can combine an online and a brick-and-mortar education, as well. They can actually go to some classrooms. We have some downrange education centers, as well, that are both brick-and-mortar and online.

So I think we are seeing these trends. I suspect that they will continue. I think the key for us, though, is ensuring that quality education.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Larsen.

Mr. LARSEN. Sir, if I could offer, in the Marine Corps, from 2005 to 2009, the for-profit enrollment has increased from about 6,500 to about—almost to 11,000. So it hasn't quite doubled, but it has significantly increased.

The not-for-profit population has remained constant at about 5,600, 5,700. And the traditional public universities have decreased, actually, from about 10,000 to about 8,000.

So there has been a marked increase in for-profit in the Marine Corps in the last five years, and the others have remained somewhat constant.

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Representative Wittman, from a Navy perspective, the for-profit schools certainly have increased, distance learning has increased, but our not-for-profit institutions have also increased.

And I would say that, across the board, distance learning in all three segments, whether it be for-profit, not-for-profit, and public, distance learning continues to increase as a segment of those populations. So we are seeing distance learning on the rise across the board.

And it is not just for-profit schools that are increasing. Not-for-profit schools, as a percentage of our population, is also increasing. It is the public that has had a little bit of a decrease. And it is only marginal. Depending on how long you look at that, you see that data going up and down.

And we are looking at the top 50 institutions, which comprise about 85 percent or so of our tuition assistance expenditures. When we look at the rest of the schools, most of those are public institutions, down below there. And when you add those in, I think the numbers might be a little bit more normalized.

Secretary STAMILIO. Mr. Wittman, if I may—thank you. Our trends are really pretty consistent with what my colleague in the Navy said.

I guess, if I understood your question correctly, the real thought is, strategically or societally, where does the nation plan to be with

regard to our mix of for-profit, non-profit, and private institutions? And, clearly, the investment that the federal government makes through the tuition assistance program is a component of that, but we are just less than 1 percent of the overall population.

And so, I believe that a big, important question of this is, obviously, the quality that we monitor very carefully through our accreditation process, but then the overall societal acceptability of institutions is really one that is at issue here.

We certainly want soldiers to have the appropriate opportunities to pursue whatever educational goals that they have, but, as you and Mr. Jones have stated, it is critical that all of that work and all of that investment translates to a credential that is acceptable by society and by the private sector.

I am not sure how the Services can attack that, other than to absolutely stay tuned, absolutely be vigilant with regard to our pursuit of quality controls, but also to make sure that we are, within all of those parameters, providing soldiers opportunities so that they can pursue the educational goals that they are looking for.

Thank you.

Mr. SITTERLY. Thank you for the question, Mr. Wittman.

We are so proud of the Community College of the Air Force. And it gives us that diversity of thought, that diversity of education that you mentioned.

The Community College of the Air Force is, in fact, the largest community college in the Air Force: as I mentioned earlier, 1.6 million credit-hours per year. If an airman goes to an aircraft-maintenance technical training, those instructors there are all certified. They have CCAF—or 90 percent of them have CCAF degrees; the other 10 percent are working on them. And so they get a certain number of hours for that.

If you go to the NCO Leadership School, that is accredited. If you go to any other enlisted training—I think we have 104, now, various facilities around the world that are accredited through the Community College of the Air Force. So 75 percent of the requirements to get an associate degree can be done directly through the Community College of the Air Force.

So I am confident that we will continue to have that diversity in education in the Air Force for many years to come. They were just recently recertified, reaccredited, and I think we have nine years until we do it again.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, gentlemen.

I think the challenge for all of you all is making sure that folks across the Service branches develop a greater understanding of the academic rigor throughout all of these opportunities so they can make a choice and then they understand the investment that they make, not only in the dollars they receive through the GI Bill but also their own personal investment in time, and what that is going to result in. So I think that is the challenge, going forward, is making sure that they understand the differences between those institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

As I think some of you know, this issue of what you all have been discussing here for some time now, the issue of how do you

measure quality when it is not—it is going to be difficult for you all to do that with 7,000 schools out there, unless there are really some big problems.

But, as you all may know, I think there has been some for-profit schools that have bought small, financially distressed community colleges that have regional accreditation, and then they use that as the tail to wag the dog. And they are now regionally accredited, and then they can offer these courses, saying they are a regionally accredited school.

I don't think that is what people hoped would happen by getting regional accreditation. I think we hoped that the quality would be going up, not just somebody found a shrewd opportunity to buy a school that was probably going under or was about to go under. But it does make it a challenge for you all.

It also seems to me—I am struck a bit by—we have spent a year or so longer than we actually planned on looking at professional military education. And we looked at it in a lot of different ways. And Chairman Skelton was very repetitive in his use of the word “rigor.” That we do not see PME—if we see PME as ticket-punching, we are in trouble as a military. That we actually think that this stuff, with a good PME course, good professional military education, it will help the individual, help our military education.

It seems like sometimes the tone here is about getting that degree, getting that associate degree, getting that credential. Well, we actually, I think—ultimately, the credential only means something if there is an education that goes along with it, and a quality education and one that helps you all in the military, helps us be safer.

And in our discussion about professional military education, we had this discussion: Do we think there is an advantage to coming to the National Defense University and the Army War College and spending 10 months there and having a seminar group that meets for several hours a day, you know, several days a week? And I think the conclusion is, yes, we think there is value in that.

And so I think we shouldn't be so—perhaps so quick to say, “Boy, these young kids are computer-oriented. It is great that they can sit at home and crank these things out on a, you know, 20-hour caffeinated weekend,” when they don't get the experience of what we—I think we are, as a military, saying we really value. We are putting a lot of money in these seminar classes, so we have a little bit of a conflict, I think. It gets back to this issue of how do you determine quality when it should be more than just ticket-punching, that the academic rigor needs to be there.

Mr. Stamilio, I think you captured this whole issue in your written statement where you said, “Since the Army complies with DOD tuition assistance policy and authorizes tuition assistance for all regionally and nationally accredited schools, we are”—and this is an understatement—“we are somewhat limited in our oversight of the non-SOC member schools and their delivery of quality educational programs to soldiers.”

I think that gets at it. I acknowledge it is not your responsibility, but you have been very clear, you don't discriminate amongst schools, and that may be a problem.

Mr. Sitterly, you may be familiar with what is going on at the Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville, Arkansas, but several

years ago—well, the whole issue came about after September 11th. They have a very robust educational program on-base, with both national for-profit schools and then Arkansas State University and some others. But when September 11th occurred and the base was shut down, it really interfered with faculty—this happened at bases all over the country.

The community responded by passing a bond issue, after discussion with the leadership of the base, and taxed themselves and raised \$5 million, which they put in a bank account, to build the facility there in partnership with the Air Force, to build it outside the perimeter, on Federal property land, on Air Force base land, but outside the perimeter, so it could be accessible both to community people, community students, community faculty, but also air base personnel.

It took a bit to convince the Air Force how to accept the check for \$5 million, but we were finally able to do that, I think partly through the congressional insert process. And that building is about done.

So there is a heck of an investment in these facilities, a heck of an investment of the community of Jacksonville in these facilities. And I think, ultimately, when we see a college, we want good things to happen there. We want it to be a rigorous academic environment that will help young people and not-so-young people and help our military. And, you know, when you see that kind of very obvious investment of both local and federal dollars, like in this facility at Jacksonville, that really does put some responsibilities on you all to sort out this quality thing.

And I don't want to pick on the for-profits; I think there are some good for-profit schools out there. But it is an issue that has flared up over the last several years. It is not going to go away, and you all are inheriting some of those issues. And for whatever reasons, I think it is very important that our military personnel not somehow get a false sense of security about their credential or a sense that all schools are equal because they are all accredited. Well, that is not—we all know that is not true. They are not all equal, and nobody here is saying that.

But I think there are some ongoing issues for the military to sort out. I won't be here to help you sort them out, but I am sure you are going to do just fine.

Anything further, Mr. Wittman?

Mr. WITTMAN. No. Thank you.

Dr. SNYDER. Let me give you an open invitation. If you all have any additional statements that you would like to be included as part of the record, feel free to respond to this question.

And I think you all are going to get me the numbers on counseling and where you see the numbers of counselors and counseling services having gone up in the last several years and where you see it going in the future.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 9:32 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

HOLD UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY
MR. ROBERT L. GORDON III
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MILITARY
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY
REGARDING
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM AND
THE QUALITY OF COLLEGE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO
SERVICE MEMBERS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

Chairman Snyder and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the Department of Defense's (DoD) Voluntary Education Programs and the quality of college education available to Service members.

The Department's Voluntary Education Programs provide lifelong learning opportunities for the off-duty military community, contributing to enhanced unit readiness for our Nation. Education helps prepare our Service members to be better Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines; better thinkers, better analysts, and better leaders

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who will continue to make valuable contributions to our nation. Our programs meet the unique needs of the military off-duty student and therefore, continue to attract a large percentage of the military population every year.

Large Population. Each year approximately one-third of our Service members enroll in post-secondary courses leading to associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Colleges and universities, through an extensive network, deliver classroom instruction to hundreds of military installations around the world. Service members are also afforded opportunities to earn college credits for learning that has taken place outside the traditional classroom. This is accomplished through programs such as college-level equivalency testing, assessment of prior learning, assessment of military training, independent study, and distance learning.

Unique Needs. Service members enrolled in Voluntary Education Programs are non-traditional students. They attend school during off-duty hours, usually during the evening. They take courses in a part-time capacity, one or two classes a term. Often the military mission, deployments, transfers or family obligations take precedence over their education so they have breaks of months or even years between taking courses and completion of their degrees normally takes a long time. Opportunities for lifelong learning exist for Service members throughout their career. To improve their basic academic skills, DoD provides high school completion programs and functional/basic skills courses in traditional classroom settings and on-line self paced programs. To

enhance their military occupation and to prepare Service members to return to civilian occupations, there are DoD supported post-secondary education programs.

First Steps. A Service member's participation in DoD-supported voluntary education programs begins with a visit to an installation education center or on-line through their Service Education portal. There are approximately 350 DoD education sites worldwide, to include Contingency areas (Iraq and Afghanistan). At these centers, education officers and education guidance counselors present Service members with an extensive menu of options, provide details about specific programs, help members design courses of study, and accomplish administrative tasks to ensure that Service members receive maximum exposure to and benefits from available programs. They also provide information on the DoD tuition assistance program, Veterans' Education Benefits, Department of Education grants and loans, and other funding options available to Service members.

Benefits. Service members receive a number of voluntary education benefits. These benefits can be broadly classified as tuition support programs or credit conversion programs. Tuition support programs help defray the cost of education. Credit conversion programs enable a Service member to use courses, occupational training, and on-the-job skills as credit toward a college degree or vocational certificate.

The following are brief descriptions of some of the major voluntary education programs and benefits:

The Military Tuition Assistance (TA) Program: The TA program is standardized across the Services, providing tuition assistance for voluntary off-duty college courses

and degree programs. TA is provided only for courses offered by post-secondary institutions accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Under the current uniform TA policy which commenced in Fiscal Year 2003 all Service participants may receive up to \$4,500 of assistance per fiscal year individual course costs have a \$250 per semester hour cap.

The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Sponsored Testing Program: The Department operates a testing program through which Service members can earn certificates, licenses, college credits, and high school diplomas. In addition, they can satisfy entrance and employment requirements with successful completion of tests like the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT/ACT), and the PRAXIS Teacher Exam. Many of these tests are offered to members at no cost. The testing program is offered uniformly across the Services and is managed by DANTES through contracts with both College Board and Prometric.

Certification Programs: For vocational education, Certification Programs enable Service members to earn certifications in specialized technical fields based on their military training. A number of national trade associations, in fields such as information technology, broadcast engineering, medical technology, food preparation, and automotive, have agreements with DANTES to provide these certification exams via our education centers. Service-specific certification programs include the Army's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL), Navy COOL, and the Navy's United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP).

Service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC): The SOC program was created to minimize residency requirements and facilitate the transfer of course credits. The SOC is a DoD contractor cosponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the American Association of Community Colleges. The SOC consortium is a group of approximately 1,900 colleges and universities offering associate's, bachelor's, and graduate-level degrees for Service members. All SOC members must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. A subset of these schools agrees to transfer credits among themselves, so Service members do not have to retake courses when they change duty stations. The SOC coordinates degree programs for the Army (SOCAD), Navy (SOCNAV), Marines (SOCMAR), Army Guard (SOCGUARD) and the Concurrent Admissions Program for Army Enlistees (CONAP). Participants must develop a degree plan and complete at least 25 percent of their degree requirements with their designated "home" college.

Community College of the Air Force (CCAF): The Air Force does not have a specific SOC program, but operates the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). CCAF is an accredited two-year college open to Air Force enlisted on active duty, or enlisted in Reserve or Guard. CCAF offers associate degree programs in areas such as aircraft and missile maintenance, electronics and telecommunications, allied health, logistics and resources, and public and support services. Similar to the SOC program, credits toward a CCAF degree can be accumulated at Air Force advanced training schools by enrolling in colleges that offer accredited courses, and through credit by examination.

American Council on Education (ACE) Evaluation of Military Training: Military coursework and occupational specialty training relevant to individual degree requirements can also count as credit. The DoD contracts with ACE to evaluate military training courses for credit. Post-secondary institutions have the final say on credit acceptance.

Quality Education. The quality of education received by our Service members is very important to DoD. All post-secondary institutions participating in the TA programs, whether they are physically on our installations or not, must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The criteria for being allowed to operate on our installations are even more stringent. Prior to operating on a military installation, an education service officer seeks favorable tuition rates, student services, and instructional support from providers. The base education staff conducts an education needs assessment to ensure that the colleges and universities providing post secondary instruction on the installations are offering appropriate education opportunities to the population. Institutions granting undergraduate academic credit must adhere to the SOC Consortium Principles and Criteria regarding the transferability of credit and the awarding of credit for military training and experience. To be selected, institutions must meet all of the following requirements: (1) Be chartered or licensed by a State government or the Federal Government, and have State approval for the use of veterans' educational benefits for the courses to be offered; (2) Be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education; (3) Conduct on-installation courses that

carry identical credit values, represent the same content and experience, and use the same student evaluation procedures as courses offered through the main administrative and academic campus; (4) Maintain the same admission and graduation standards that exist for the same programs at the main administrative and academic office, and include credits from courses taken off-campus in establishing academic residency to meet degree requirements; (5) Charge tuition and fees that are not more than those charged to nonmilitary students; (6) Have established policies for awarding credit for military training by examinations, experiential learning, and courses completed using modes of delivery other than instructor-delivered, on-site classroom instruction.

The quality of our education programs involves the installation education center, education officers, installation base commanders, the Services, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and our institutional partners. To support these efforts, DoD has contracted with ACE to develop a process called the Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER), which provides a third party, independent review of our on-installation programs. The review assesses the quality of voluntary education programs at selected military installations each year and assists in the improvement of voluntary education programs through appropriate recommendations to colleges and universities and installation commanders. DoD is proactively taking this approach to quality one step further to include those programs not on our installations. To that end, in the future, we will use improved quality criteria to review programs of those institutions receiving TA dollars that operate on and off our installations. Our new policy, currently on the Federal

Register for public review, states all institutions participating in the TA program will have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DoD, which articulates the commitment and agreements between the educational institutions receiving TA. One of these agreements is to participate in the DoD Military Installation Voluntary Education Review Process. The policy includes traditional classroom and distance learning institutions operating on and off the military installations.

The DoD's interaction with post-secondary institutions is further strengthened through the SOC. The SOC advocates for and communicates the needs of the military community to the higher education community. The SOC ensures institutions are responsive to the special needs of the Service members, assists the higher education community to understand the requirements of the military, and serves as the DoD liaison with institutions to resolve concerns and share program information to strengthen education relationships with DoD.

Conclusion:

DoD is committed to offering high quality, comprehensive, lifelong learning opportunities for Service members and effectively delivering voluntary education programs that meet the changing needs of the military. Our programs assist Service members in gaining the knowledge they need for their chosen education and military career paths; ensuring they acquire the skills necessary to operate in a dynamic national security environment; and in returning to civilian life, that they are prepared to be

successful in their chosen careers, leading contributors to their communities, and productive citizens in the 21st century.

STATEMENT BY

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UNITED STATES ARMY

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

SECOND SESSION, 111TH CONGRESS

ON THE ARMY'S VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM AND QUALITY OF COLLEGE
EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
VETERANS ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduction

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the Army's Voluntary Education programs and services which afford lifelong learning opportunities for Soldiers and their families. The Army Continuing Education System (ACES) is the organizational structure Army uses to deliver educational opportunities to Soldiers to develop and enhance skills needed for personal and professional development. These skills help to sustain the All Volunteer Force and to assist the Army in retaining its position as the world's premier land force. This is accomplished through vigorously promoting lifelong learning opportunities that sharpen Army's competitive edge by providing and managing quality self-development and continuing education programs and services. Soldier participation in voluntary education activities promotes the development of critical thinking skills and improves analytical abilities, essential tools needed to survive and win on today's battlefield.

Army Continuing Education System

Army voluntary education covers the education spectrum beginning with basic skills, certificate, associates, bachelors, and master's degrees, meeting Soldiers where they are, allowing Soldiers to learn as they choose thereby educating them for Army's present and future needs. Army has consistently maintained Voluntary Education as a priority by fully funding the tuition assistance budget and executing the program in accordance with the Department of Defense (DoD) uniform TA policy. Institutions that

provide voluntary off-duty education programs must be regionally or nationally accredited by accrediting bodies that are recognized by the Department of Education.

Army promotes the education of Soldiers of all components: Active, Reserve and National Guard. Despite the high operational tempo of the past nine years, Soldier participation in education programs, especially college programs, continues to grow. During the past two years alone, Army college course enrollments have increased nine percent. To date this fiscal year, more than 247,921 active duty, US Army Reserve and Army National Guard Soldiers (22%) have enrolled in 535,081 courses at more than 2,500 academic and training institutions. Even more telling is the growth in Soldier participation in distance learning or online courses. In fiscal year 2005, enrollments were almost evenly split between traditional classroom and online courses. This year, to date, more than 76% of all enrollments have been in online courses. Clearly access to quality online courses enables Army's warfighters to continue their progress towards degree completion regardless of duty location, work schedule, and/or family commitments.

Using the talents of professional education counselors and education support personnel, we have continued to assist Soldiers in accomplishing their educational objectives to include making informed decisions on what accredited institutions and programs best meet their needs. The ultimate educational goal for every Soldier is the completion of an educational credential – certificate, associate, undergraduate or graduate degree. In fiscal year 2009 alone, over 4,000 Soldiers earned post-secondary degrees and certificates (1,469 associates; 1,591 bachelors; 962 graduate degrees and

71 licensures/credentials). Over the years, Army has established outstanding educational programs and services which position Army as a leader in the delivery of voluntary educational services. We intend through these programs to provide a competitive edge for Soldiers to enhance their military careers and to find employment comparable to their civilian counterparts as they depart the Army and enter the civilian employment sector.

We have in place a robust oversight program in partnership with Servicemembers Opportunities Colleges (SOC) to monitor the compliance of our academic partner institutions to include "for-profit" schools to ensure that they meet established SOC principles. In addition, SOC schools are required to report course completion rates and report graduates on a regular basis. However, since Army complies with DoD Tuition Assistance policy and authorizes tuition assistance for all regionally/nationally accredited schools, we are somewhat limited in our oversight of the non-SOC member schools and their delivery of quality educational programs to Soldiers.

GoArmyEd Portal

One of the many programs and services provided by ACES is the GoArmyEd (GAE) Portal. The GAE Portal is the Army's virtual gateway for both Active Duty and Army Reserve Soldiers to request education services and obtain tuition assistance, anytime, anywhere. The student management system for voluntary education participation, GoArmyEd (GAE) eliminated many of the paper-based, in-person processes that Soldiers were previously required to complete. Soldiers use GAE to

carefully guide and track completion of their postsecondary educational goals. Army Education Counselors use it to provide virtual educational counseling to Soldiers 24/7 at locations around the globe. Participating schools use the portal to streamline school acceptance/enrollment processes, deliver degree and course offerings and report Soldier progress 24/7 worldwide. GoArmy Ed also provides extremely efficient and effective financial management of the Tuition Assistance program to include streamlined payments to schools, automated tuition recoupment and online billing. In 2009, GAE won the distinction as one of the top 50 innovations in government in competition sponsored by the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government's Ash Institute for Democratic Governance.

In FY10, ACES integrated the U.S. Army Reserves into the GAE portal, with the addition of more than 1700 schools. Reserve Soldiers traditionally enroll with colleges and universities near their hometowns; consequently, the large increase in the number of schools that needed to be incorporated into the portal to serve them. The Army plans to fully integrate the Army National Guard into GAE at the beginning of FY12. At that time, Army will be able to more effectively manage Tuition Assistance enrollments across all Components regardless of a Soldier's active or reserve status. This is especially beneficial to ensure mobilized Soldiers continue successful progress towards degree completion while on active duty.

Counseling Services

Academic and vocational counseling services assist Soldiers in establishing professional and educational goals, developing education plans, and transitioning to

civilian life with counseling regarding Veterans' education benefits. Professional counselors also monitor student progress via automated alert flags within GoArmyEd, such as excessive withdrawals, course failures, or course incompletes.

Functional Academic Skills Training

Functional Academic Skills Training (FAST) is an on-duty program that provide Soldiers job-related instruction to improve basic educational competencies necessary for job proficiency, advanced schooling, and career progression.

A wide range of postsecondary programs are offered on Army installations, at local colleges and training institutions, as well as through distance learning programs from the associate through graduate degree levels, as well as technical courses for licensure or certification.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges-Army Degrees

Army's college degree system provides off-duty associate and baccalaureate degree programs in over 30 different fields of study through an Army-wide network of more than 120 institutions. By establishing a Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges-Army Degrees (SOCAD) degree plan, Soldiers are guaranteed credit transferability between participating schools, acceptance of non- traditional credits, and minimal residency requirements. This is especially important for Soldiers who may require years to complete degree requirements from multiple locations.

The SOCAD program has now been expanded to incorporate an Army career degree option which maximizes Army learning experiences and minimizes additional college study for the vast majority of Army Career Management Fields. The Army Career Degree (ACD) Program uses the American Council on Education credit recommendations to thoroughly and comprehensively articulate degree options directly related to a Soldier's Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). The ACD plan provides a military-specific degree career path for Soldiers, guaranteed transferability of college credits among member institutions, limited academic residency requirements, and a formal agreement between college and student. Partner schools must also provide distance learning course options to fill any knowledge gaps thereby ensuring requirements can be completed anytime and anywhere.

Credentialing Opportunities On-Line

In recognition of the importance of credentialing for Soldier professional and personal development, the Army launched the Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) in 2002. The COOL web site (<https://www.cool.army.mil>) provides information to Soldiers on how they can fulfill the requirements for civilian certifications and licenses that are related to their military occupational specialties (MOSs). COOL serves as a tool to facilitate the process of identifying and then filling the gaps between a Soldier's training and experience and the desired civilian credentialing requirements. The web site is specifically designed to aid Soldiers in translating their military training and work experience to the civilian workforce.

Testing Program

Academic, vocational interest and Army Personnel Testing (APT) services are available at all of our 116 education centers around the world, including sites in Iraq and Afghanistan. Academic and vocational testing includes college level for-credit exams and testing to meet professional certification requirements. APT services include testing to meet Army promotion, language proficiency and reenlistment requirements.

The American Council on Education

The American Council on Education (ACE) serves as an invaluable link between the Department of Defense and higher education through its review of military training and experiences for the award of equivalent college credits for members of the Armed Forces. Much of Army formal training has been evaluated by ACE and is recommended for civilian academic credit. The ACE credit recommendations assist Soldiers in obtaining credentials or degrees in much less time than ordinarily required and result in significant cost avoidance to the military tuition assistance program.

Of equal value to Army is the third-party review process conducted by the American Council on Education referred to as the Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER). Army participates in MIVER as a formal process to assess the quality of services provided by academic institutions and related support services available to Soldiers on military installations. During the period 2005 to present, ACE has conducted a review of programs on ten Army installations. With the planned expansion of MIVER to include distance learning and off-post providers, Army expects

to have greater assurance that Soldiers and the Army are receiving quality and value for its tuition assistance investment. In addition, we fully support the DoD policy initiative to require all institutions participating in the Tuition Assistance program to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DoD. Schools that fail to meet the terms of the MOU can be denied Tuition Assistance funding, helping to further ensure quality educational opportunities for Soldiers. Assessing the quality of education provided to the Soldiers is an on-going priority for Army.

The Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript Service

The Army's transcript service for Soldiers and Veterans officially articulates each Soldier's military course completions, the respective ACE-recommended college credits as well as other learning experiences. The transcript serves as a counseling tool for academic and career counselors to assist in estimating the experiential credit that translates to a specific course of study. Colleges and universities use it as the official military transcript once the Soldier is accepted for admission. In addition, the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript Service (AARTS) transcript serves as an invaluable aid in assisting Soldiers in preparing their resumes in obtaining civilian employment. Military training and work history on the AARTS Transcript is described in easily understood language. This is especially helpful to potential employers.

Conclusion

We are confident that our VOLED program provides every Soldier the opportunity to meet their professional and personal educational goals. We further believe we provide a balanced approach that enables success on the job and in the college arena helping to ensure Soldiers are fully prepared to meet the challenges in a global environment.

It has been my pleasure to tell you about Army Education and ACES. We thank you for your continued support for Army continuing education programs.

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
MR. SCOTT LUTTERLOH
DIRECTOR, TRAINING AND EDUCATION DIVISION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS
SEPTEMBER 22, 2010**

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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Snyder, Representative Wittman, and distinguished members of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you to discuss College Opportunities for Servicemembers, particularly with respect to Navy's Voluntary Education (VOLED) Program.

Navy continues to recruit high quality individuals who have expressed interest, not only in training, but also in education. Navy's VOLEd program seeks to satisfy education interests by providing life-long learning opportunities for our Sailors. These opportunities are balanced with other critical professional requirements to support our goal of ensuring the growth and development of every Sailor to fully contribute to readiness and mission accomplishment. We recognize that education not only develops knowledge in a particular discipline, but also enhances important skills such as critical thinking decision, making, goal setting and goal achievement. Education has proven to be a factor in improved productivity, motivation, job satisfaction, recruiting and retention.

Navy's VOLEd program is comprised of two key components, Tuition Assistance (TA) and the Navy College Program for Afloat College Education (NCPACE). These programs are the primary means by which enlisted personnel pursue higher education. Nearly 105,000 enlisted personnel and over 1,800 Officers participated in TA and NCPACE in Fiscal Year 2009. TA provides Sailors stationed ashore up to \$250 per credit hour, per Department of Defense (DoD) policy and caps the yearly course allowance at 16 semester hours. NCPACE provides similar opportunity for Sailors at sea. Program benefits are managed consistent with the need to balance pursuit of education with other professional priorities, such as mastery of rating skills, warfare qualification, and progressive development of leadership skills.

Navy has best leveraged the investment in VOLEd through memberships in associations such as the Servicemembers Opportunity College Navy (SOCNAV) and the American Council

on Education (ACE). SOCNAV has built a consortium of colleges and universities which agree to accept transfer of credits from other participating institutions. This is a vital element of the program given the highly transient military life style. Through SOCNAV, the degree-granting college requires students to complete 25 percent of degree requirements through its institution. Remaining credits can be completed through other colleges or through acceptance of training and experience that have been evaluated for college credit by ACE. Through SOCNAV and ACE, we have successfully overcome challenges to degree completion and transferability of college credit while acknowledging military training and experience. We have additionally encouraged Sailors to take advantage of the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Testing Program. Through DANTES, Sailors have been able take tests to receive academic credit for experiential learning as well as satisfy entrance and certification requirements.

Over the past several years, distance learning has become more popular with adult learners and Sailors are no exception. To support the change in delivery mode and to further increase Sailors' chances of success, we established Navy College Program Distance Learning Partners (NCPDLP). These partners have developed rating-relevant associate and bachelor degree programs for Navy's 72 enlisted ratings and career fields for Sailors in ships, squadrons and shore stations around the world. Our Partners agree to keep residency requirements at a minimum and to provide required courses through distance learning. They agree to transfer credits from other regionally accredited institutions and to remain within the DoD established credit hour cap. Navy, in turn, provides links to Partner degree plans on the Navy College website.

In 2007, to integrate learning from training, education, and experience across a career, we began development of Enlisted Learning and Development Career Roadmaps. These roadmaps lay the foundation for success in each rating. While not absolute for promotion, roadmaps

account for career milestones related to training, education, Professional Military Education, duty assignments and leadership development. In the case of the Legalman rating, integration of training and education has advanced to the point where an Associate Degree in Paralegal Studies from an American Bar Association (ABA)-accredited institution has been made a part of the job requirement.

CHALLENGES

Our goals are to continue to improve the success rates of Sailors in achieving their educational aspirations, influencing Sailors to make good choices through careful planning, and maximizing use of limited education resources. This becomes an ever increasing challenge with rising costs for education, particularly in the area of distance learning and competing requirements for scarce resources. We have implemented several management controls that target efficiencies, such as limiting a Sailor to one degree at a particular level, requiring every Sailor to have a degree plan, and funding only courses that lead to the degree.

SUCSESSES

We have taken a holistic approach in transforming our VOLED program with consideration of professional and personal demands on today's Sailors. In July 2010, we opened a state of the art Virtual Education Center (VEC) staffed by academic advisors who provide easy access to one-stop-shopping for counseling and educational information. New capabilities include on-line access for Sailors to view their automated degree plans and progress towards degree completion, and to process TA claims. We will continue to provide educational services at 36 Navy College Offices in fleet concentration areas.

It is our vision that every Sailor who elects to enroll in off-duty education courses has a positive learning experience and satisfactorily completes those courses, regardless of duty

assignment. We are proud to provide Sailors the means to complete college degrees regardless of their location, and to offer options that will maximize the awarding of credits earned through training and job experience. Education programs are an integral part, of Navy's success in developing well prepared leaders for key assignments around the world.

CONCLUSION

Navy's Voluntary Education program provides every Sailor the opportunity to take college courses in an environment where success is the norm. We remain committed to providing a balanced approach that allows success, both on the job and in the college arena, as we develop Sailors to serve in a broad range of assignments around the world. Thank you for your continuing support for the men and women of the United States Navy and to the professional and personal development of the Navy Total Force.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM AND QUALITY OF
COLLEGE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

STATEMENT OF: MR. DANIEL R. SITTERLY
DIRECTOR OF FORCE DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

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THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES UNITED
STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduction

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Air Force's college education opportunities and the quality of college education available to Airmen. We pride ourselves in promoting a culture of lifelong learning and education for our Airmen. We value voluntary education not only as a way to enhance our Airmen's military careers but also as a credential when transitioning back to civilian life.

Quality education is valued in both our officer and enlisted force. Our officers are mentored to complete a master's degree prior to meeting their major's promotion board. For our enlisted force, the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) provides a means to receive college credit for their Air Force training. The CCAF awards an Associate in Applied Science degree and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Airmen complete this associate degree on a part-time basis. They are then encouraged to continue toward a bachelor's and a master's degree. Recent statistics show that 99% of the top two enlisted ranks have achieved an associate degree or higher. All of these civilian education pursuits are voluntary for our Airmen.

Basic Air Force Voluntary Education Operations

Every Air Force base has an Education and Training Office dedicated to the intellectual development of our Airmen. Airmen receive counseling on a multitude of topics that assist them with their military force development and their choices regarding civilian college opportunities. Each office also has a testing section that enables Airmen

to shorten degree completion time by using the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) to show college level proficiency in degree-required courses. In addition to face-to-face counseling, the Air Force Voluntary Education Center (AFVEC) is an online resource where Airmen can research educational subjects, search for colleges that will accept CCAF credits and apply on-line for the Military Tuition Assistance (Mil TA) benefit.

Air Force Military Tuition Assistance (Mil TA)

Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2306, Voluntary Education Program, 13 August 2010, guides Air Force policy regarding use of federal funds for the Mil TA benefit. This AFI receives its authority from Title 10, Section 2007, and policy guidance from the Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 1322.25, Voluntary Education Programs, 5 February 1997. In fiscal year 2003, the Air Force Voluntary Education Program implemented new Mil TA uniform caps and ceilings established by the Department of Defense, OUSD (P&R) Military Community and Family Policy. That year the Air Force experienced a 44% increase in enrollments and an 88% increase in expenditures. Even though the Air Force has experienced a decrease in military end-strength and increased operations tempo the number of enrollments has remained relatively stable. In FY02, 18% of the Air Force active duty population participated in college programs. By FY09, the participation rate had risen to 30%. In any one fiscal year, we estimate that 1 in 3 Airmen take an average of three college classes each year. One of the reasons for high participation may in part be due to distance learning (DL) opportunities that have arisen

from both the start up of new on-line schools and the creation of on-line courses and degrees by traditional brick-and-mortar schools. These opportunities enable Airmen to continue college progress despite demanding work schedules and deployments to austere locations.

Changes, Challenges and Quality – The “DL” Revolution

In the past five years the Air Force has noted an upward trend in Distance Learning (DL) college attendance. DL enrollments increased 35% from FY02 to FY09. Along with this enrollment trend, we noted the average cost difference between traditional in-the-classroom courses and DL courses and found that DL, on average, has been a higher expenditure for the Air Force. The difference went from 23% in FY03 to a high difference of 46% in FY05 and back down to a difference of 28% in FY09. Despite this difference in average tuition expenditure, the Air Force still authorizes Mil TA using the DOD policy of \$250/semester hour cap and \$4,500 maximum annual ceiling.

The actual tuition rate of the school is not a big concern for the Air Force since the Mil TA program will not pay over the \$250/SH rate. If an Airman chooses a school with a higher rate than Mil TA allows, he/she must pay out of pocket or use the “top-up” benefit that allows the G.I. Bill education benefit to cover costs not paid by Mil TA. The Air Force does not maintain G.I. Bill benefit payment information since the Department of Veteran Affairs is the adjudicator of that benefit. We do not know of any Airman paying high amounts from their pocket or even taking out loans. Most Airmen choose a

school that fits within the Mil TA program or a combination of Mil TA and G.I. Bill “top-up.”

The Air Force tracks data on overall college enrollments and DL enrollments, not the classification of the school such as public/private, for-profit/non-profit. When it comes to quality, the decision point for authorization of Mil TA is the accreditation of the school. If the school is accredited by a regional or a national accrediting agency recognized by the Department of Education, Mil TA can be authorized when other Air Force policies are met in AFI 36-2306.

If the quality of education is questioned at any time, Airmen may bring a complaint about a school, a program, an instructor, etc., to the school or to the Education and Training Office Chief. If a complaint cannot be settled at that first level it is raised to the appropriate Major Command level, Air Force Headquarters level, the Department of Defense Continuing Education Programs Office, or in some cases to the accrediting agency. The AF finds that most complaints are resolved at the first level – school or Education and Training Office.

Policy Changes

With the growth of the Internet and relatively inexpensive cost of a computer and Internet service, education is continuing to move toward an “on-line” mode. Although, the Air Force has no control over advertising to Airmen from schools off-base or through the Internet, we have policy regarding commercial solicitation by schools on Air Force bases. AFI 36-2917, Personal Commercial Solicitation on DOD Installations,

7 November 2007, and DODI 1344.07, of the same title, provide guidelines to base Commanders and Education and Training Offices regarding access to the base for the purpose of pursuing new students. The Air Force has a policy of neutrality regarding schools in that we do not endorse nor do we discount any school. Instead we counsel Airmen regarding degree programs, transfer of credit, and financial options. Ultimately, they make the final decision of the school they wish to attend and the program they wish to pursue.

For nearly 40 years the Air Force has established Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with schools in order for them to bring classes and full degree programs into classrooms on Air Force bases as a convenience to Airmen. The decision to bring school programs on-base is done in accordance with DODI 1322.25, Voluntary Education Programs, 5 February 1997. The base must show a need for a new program or school and review options from several schools that might be interested or have the capability to provide a new offering on-base. It is a deliberate process.

Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) – The Success Story!

The CCAF is the jewel of the Air Force education opportunities for enlisted personnel. It is regionally accredited so that the college credit earned through military training can apply to an associate degree and also be compatible with other regionally accredited schools. 75% of the degree can be earned through Air Force training in an enlisted Airman's particular career field. Only 25% of the degree needs to be earned from an accredited civilian college and all of the courses are the general education

courses found in all Associate degrees. To embed education even more into the Air Force culture, this degree is a requirement to obtain a Senior Rater Endorsement on an annual enlisted performance appraisal. This policy raises the CCAF degree to a level in an Airman's career that shows competency in both a particular career field and in academics. Many Airmen use the CCAF degree in place of seeking other certifications or licensures before separating or retiring. Recent self-report surveys indicate that Airmen are finding the CCAF degree very helpful when job hunting in the civilian world. And even more pleasing, the Air Force has established a program where schools register and guarantee that credits from the CCAF degree will transfer toward specific bachelor degrees so Airmen have only 60 semester hours of credit to complete. Currently there are 46 schools with 225 degrees accepting CCAF credit in transfer.

Conclusion:

Quality education is a valued part of our AF culture. It is a consideration as officers and enlisted are promoted in their careers. It is desired by the Airmen themselves for the value they know education can have for them in the civilian community. Airmen have more education options than ever before in history. The Air Forces sees its obligation as one of educating our Airmen about all the options so each man and woman serving our nation can make a wise choice of school and degree program for their military career and their personal life.



BIOGRAPHY

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

DANIEL R. SITTERLY

Daniel R. Sitterly, a member of the Senior Executive Service, is the Director, Force Development, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. He is responsible for developing the strategies, policies, systems and oversight needed to ensure more than 675,000 Airmen are ready to accomplish their missions. In addition, he serves as the Air Force Senior Language Authority, responsible for establishing policy and providing oversight of the Air Force's culture, language and regional programs. He oversees the Air Force senior leader development program and provides Headquarters U.S. Air Force oversight and support to the U.S. Air Force Academy. Mr. Sitterly also serves as the Chief Diversity Officer for the Air Force.



Mr. Sitterly attended school in upstate New York and has a Master of Science degree in education from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. He began his career with the Air Force in 1976 where he earned a commission and then served as a combat service support officer through 2003. In 2004, he entered federal service full time as the Chief, Congressional Action Division, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. He was responsible for developing and executing the Air Force's legislative strategy on major national security issues. In 2008, he became the Director of Staff, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. The directorate is the liaison between the Air Force and Congress on issues such as legislative and constituent inquiries, programs and weapons systems.

Mr. Sitterly has been an Airman for 33 continuous years. He has qualifications in budget, accounting and finance, information management, communications, services, personnel and legislative affairs. After retirement from active duty, he entered the Air Force Reserve and retired in 2009 from the Air Force Personnel Center in San Antonio, Texas.

EDUCATION

1983 Bachelor of Science degree in business and Asian studies, University of Maryland
 1987 Master of Science degree in education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles
 1988 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
 1995 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
 1998 Joint Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Va.
 2000 Air War College, by seminar
 2006 Seminar XXI - Program on Foreign Politics, International Relations and the National Interest, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge
 2007 Senior Leadership Course, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, N.C. 2007 Enterprise Leadership Seminar, University North Carolina

DANIEL R. SITTERLY

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CAREER CHRONOLOGY

1. 1976 - 1977, accounting technician, 341st Strategic Missile Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Mont.
2. 1978 - 1981, Deputy Chief, Commercial Services, 475th Comptroller Squadron, Yokota Air Base, Japan
3. 1981 - 1984, Professional Military Education Instructor, 6007th School Squadron, Yokota AB, Japan
4. 1985 - 1987, executive officer, 380th Avionics Maintenance Squadron, Plattsburgh AFB, N.Y.
5. 1987 - 1988, section commander, 8th Security Police Squadron, Kunsan AB, South Korea
6. 1988 - 1993, group and wing executive officer; Chief, Protocol, 374th Tactical Airlift Wing, Yokota AB, Japan
7. 1993 - 1995, Commander, Military Support Flight, 374th Services Division, Yokota AB, Japan
8. 1995 - 1996, student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
9. 1996 - 1998, Chief, Manpower and Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Forces Japan, Yokota AB, Japan
10. 1988 - 2000, Commander, 35th Mission Support Squadron, Misawa AB, Japan
11. 2000 - 2000, Deputy Chief, Skills Management Division, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.
12. 2000 - 2002, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C.
13. 2003 - 2004, Congressional legislative consultant, Council for Logistics Research, Inc., Washington, D.C.
14. 2004 - 2008, Chief, Congressional Action Division, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C.
15. 2008 - 2009, Director of Staff, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C.
16. 2009 - present, Director, Force Development, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Defense Meritorious Service Medal
 Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters
 Air Force Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters
 1992 Information Management Officer of the Year, Pacific Air Forces
 1994 Services Officer of the Year, Pacific Air Forces
 1997 Senior Personnel Officer of the Year, 11th Wing
 1999 Pacific Air Forces Outstanding Mission Support Squadron of the Year

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Society for Human Resource Management
 Air Force Association
 National Military Family Association
 National Eagle Scout Association
 Air Force Sergeants Association

(Current as of July 2009)

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**STATEMENT OF
MR. TIMOTHY R. LARSEN
DIRECTOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY READINESS DIVISION
MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS
ON
SEPTEMBER 22, 2010**

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Chairman Snyder, Ranking Member Wittman, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your interest in the Marine Corps' Voluntary Education Programs and for the opportunity to discuss college education opportunities, concerns associated with the quality of education provided by schools, and steps taken by the Marine Corps to manage and oversee this activity.

COLLEGE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Tuition Assistance. The Marine Corps Tuition Assistance Program is consistent with the Department of Defense's uniform policy standard in that it is available to all active duty Marines and Reservists on continuous active duty. Each Marine receives \$4500.00 per fiscal year (1 Oct-30 Sep), with a cap of \$250 per semester hour. The tuition assistance eligibility guidelines provide that:

- Funds are authorized for vocational and technical, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs;
- Funds may only be provided to those academic institutions that are properly accredited and recognized by the Department of Education (DoE); and
- The Marine Corps does not have the legal authorization to deny tuition assistance to any academic institutions that are recognized by DoE.

Marine Corps Tuition Assistance Utilization Rates. In FY09, 30,739 Marines took 74,695 courses, utilizing a total of \$48,106,577. The 25 schools with the highest enrollments received 81 percent of Marine Corps tuition assistance funding. Of the 25 schools, 58 percent were proprietary/for-profit institutions, 20 percent were state supported/public schools, and 22 percent

were independent schools. Overall, the Marine Corps' average tuition assistance participation rate is 14 percent of our active duty end strength. Over the last five years, the Marine Corps' tuition assistance participation rates have been very consistent, ranging from 13 to 15 percent. In FY09, 95 percent of Marines received a passing grade. However, of the Marines taking their first class, we see a completion rate of only 82 percent.

There were 702 waivers granted for various reasons, such as duty, transfer, medical, or emergency situations.

Distance Learning. Using tuition assistance participation rates as a basis for calculation, we know that there has been a steady increase in our Marines' participation in distance learning courses over the last five years, from 49 percent in FY05 to 64 percent in FY09. The growth of participation and interest in distance learning can be attributed to many different factors:

- First, it reflects our increasingly mobile and technologically advanced society. Distance learning allows Marines to continue their education regardless of where their duty stations may be located. It is both portable and convenient for our expeditionary Marines.
- Although distance learning courses may have originally started out as correspondence courses, they now encompass myriad of education delivery modes, ranging from correspondence, CD, and videoconferencing, to hybrid or blended courses of study. This emerging technology is becoming widely used in universities and institutions around the world.
- It is both portable and convenient for our expeditionary Marines.

The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) assists Service members with readjustment after their separation from military service by providing education and training opportunities for

individuals who first enter active duty on or after 1 July 1985. Participation of active duty and veteran Marines over the last five years has been very consistent, ranging from approximately 55,000 to 58,000 per year. Approximately 96 percent of users are veterans and the remaining are Active Duty Marines.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill was implemented in August 2009 and there has not been sufficient time to identify quantifiable metrics on the impacts of the program. However, the provisions of the program seem to be universally welcomed and appreciated by Marines. Current data reflects that approximately 6,000 Marines have been approved to transfer their benefits.

The Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Marine Corps (SOCMAR), a consortium of colleges and universities, assists Marines in earning a college degree despite geographic and institutional obstacles by providing increased transfer credit flexibility, limited residency requirement, and recognition of military learning for academic credit.

Deployed Education provides education opportunities for Marines who are deployed. Marines who are permanently assigned to ships for duty may participate in the Navy's Program for Afloat College Education (PACE) or participate in classes aboard ship, specific for their units. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point have established Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with academic institutions to deliver undergraduate level courses aboard ship. Other deployed Marines may participate in programs and services provided by the Tri-Service Postsecondary Contract for Europe and CENTCOM Contract for Afghanistan and Africa. Enrollments in our deployed education program are as follows:

DEPLOYED EDUCATION PROGRAM		
YEAR	Enrollments	Cost
2009	5,512	\$3,441,837
2008	5,094	\$2,977,861
2007	3,705	\$2,045,032
2006	4,708	\$2,543,228
2005	3,891	\$1,181,980

CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY OF EDUCATION SCHOOLS

The Marine Corps has concerns with the quality of education and, in some cases, the practices of some academic institutions providing Voluntary Education programs to our Service Members. Some of these concerns include aggressive marketing and recruiting techniques that are handled at the local level. If not resolved, issues are elevated to Headquarters Marine Corps for remediation.

We rely heavily on the accreditation bodies recognized by the Department of Education (DoE). As long as an academic institution is recognized by the DoE, the Marine Corps will provide funds. We also believe that new policies proposed by OSD will help establish universal controls over a schools conduct and interactions with potential students. Primary to this effort is the requirement that all institutions participating in the TA program will have a Memorandum of Understanding, which articulates the commitment and agreements between the educational institutions and DoD prior to an institution accepting funds via each Service's TA program.

Other disciplines for each education institution include:

- Must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Department of Education.
- Must agree to support the regulatory guidance provided by DoD and the Services.

- Must agree to participate in the Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER).
- Must agree to one single TA rate, per Office of Postsecondary Education identification number.
- Must agree to provide course enrollment, course withdrawal, course cancellation, course completion or failure, grade, verification of degree completion, and billing information to TA issuing Service's education departments, as outlined in the Service's regulations and instructions.

ACTIONS TO MANAGE AND OVERSEE PROGRAMS

There are a number of actions to help manage and oversee programs:

- The Command Inspector General (CIG) conducts the Command Inspection Process (CIP) on the Voluntary Education program every three years.
- In addition, the Marine Corps has conducted two Functionality Assessments (FA) on our Voluntary Education program.
 - The first FA, which was conducted in August 2002, resulted in the primary recommendation that Active Duty Marines working in the Voluntary Education Center be returned to operational units. As a result, thirty-one military billets were converted to civilian billets. Other actions included the development of staffing models, program standards and performance measures.
 - The second FA, which was completed in June of this year, resulted in the recommendation that we integrate complementary programs and services to provide a "one-stop shopping" capability to Marines. Our primary objective with this initiative, which I discuss in greater detail later in my statement, is to provide every Marine with

an opportunity to successfully achieve their educational and career goals through personal roadmaps.

- Our Lifelong Learning policy was recently revised and signed earlier this month.
- Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER) is sponsored by the DoD to assess the quality of off-duty post-secondary educational programs and services used by Service members regardless of location or duty assignment, and to assist in the improvement of education programs and services. The Marine Corps participates in the MIVER assessment process to ensure that the education programs are high quality and meet academic criteria, regardless of the delivery method or the location.
- External Reviews. Currently, we are engaged with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on its study of DoD's Tuition Assistance program, as well as the Defense Manpower Data Center's strategic assessment of whether the utilization of tuition assistance on enlisted, active duty and Reserve components has an impact on retention and promotion, as required by the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2008. In addition, we are working on a request from your Subcommittee staff, as well as a request from Members of the Senate, to compile data and statistics on our tuition assistance and voluntary education programs. We look forward to the outcomes of these reviews.
- The Marine Corps has implemented additional measures to assist Marines in their educational pursuits:
 - Marines who arrive to a new installation are required to be introduced to the Lifelong Learning education center and to receive a brief overview of the voluntary education programs and services offered at the installation.

- First time tuition assistance users must participate in a College 101 brief, which provides a larger overview of the tuition assistance program, the tuition assistance enrollment process, and the Marine's role/responsibility in pursuing additional learning.
 - Once the College 101 brief has been completed, Marines can meet on a one-on-one basis with a counselor who determines the Marine's eligibility based on their General Technical (GT) score.
 - Scores of 99 or below require the Marine to take a further assessment test in the form of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The TABE, which is a diagnostic test used to determine a person's skill levels and aptitudes, is used as a measurement to guide people into adult education programs, such as getting a GED or going to trade school. It is also used by many companies for hiring and promotions or for selecting employees for training programs.
 - Marines who score a minimum of 10.2 on this test are authorized to utilize tuition assistance under the guidance of the education counselor.
 - Those who do not score the minimum may be required to enroll in a basic skills program such as the Military Academic Skills Program (MASP).
 - Employing policies such as these have allowed the Marine Corps to ensure that our service members have the skills and means available to be successful in pursuing their educational goals.
- Program Initiatives. Marine Corps leadership has affirmed that we must aggressively support the professional and personal development pursuits of every Marine. We

recognize that education is the primary key to helping a Marine in these endeavors. To that end, we have embarked on two related initiatives:

- The first is a reorganization of our traditional Transition Assistance Management Program. Heretofore, our focus has been on ensuring that each departing/transitioning Marine receives a body of information required by statute and/or that is deemed to be most useful to the Marine. While we have successfully met the required program delivery standards, we have not been able to successfully bring together all the disparate programs that could aid a Marine through the military lifecycle including the transition process. We have developed a solution which calls for integrating complementary services, such as Transition Assistance, Voluntary and Off Duty Education, Personal Financial Management, and Family Member Employment Assistance, and acting to begin the personal and professional development process at the point of initial entry. This integrated program delivery will provide “one-stop shopping” and help Marines establish their personal and professional roadmaps to not only be successful in the Corps but also through transition to becoming productive and responsible citizens.
- The second initiative focuses on providing post secondary education opportunities for every Marine who wishes to invest their time, talents, and resources in the pursuit of a college education. To this end, we have proactively engaged with a number of major universities to establish a Special Admissions Program that matches a willing and qualified Marine with the school of their choice. To date, our experience has been remarkable. Currently, there are 13 universities in North Carolina, 23 universities in California, as well as such prestigious universities as Colgate and Columbia, who are

full partners in this program. Based on these early successes, we expect to have formal relationships established with 100 of our Nation's top universities by the end of Fiscal Year 2011. Given the enthusiastic response from and endorsement by participating university leaders, we are confident that we will ultimately have universities from every corner of the Nation participating in the Special Admissions Program. This Special Admissions Programs creates the perfect match between a willing Marine, a willing university, the application of the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefit, use of the Yellow Ribbon Program, and diversification of the student cultural and educational experience via the introduction of qualified veterans to the university campus. The Special Admissions Program is a true "win-win" initiative.

CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps is committed to ensuring that your Marines receive education programs and services on par with the highest academic standards in the Nation.

We are grateful for your interest and steadfast support in this area and thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. JONES

Secretary GORDON. The American Council on Education (ACE) has conducted 60 Military Installation Voluntary Education Reviews (MIVERs) on behalf of the Department of Defense during the past five years. A MIVER visit evaluates at least three colleges/universities at each military site and often involves multiple installations located in close proximity. No colleges/universities have been delisted as a result of these reviews.

The purpose of the MIVER is to: 1) assess the quality of selected on-base voluntary education programs; and 2) assist in improving the programs by providing recommendations to institutions, installations, and the military Services. The five principle program areas that the MIVER assesses are mission statement and command support, program management and leadership, student services, resources, and voluntary education program plan. These principles were developed with the intent of establishing and maintaining servicemember access to higher education programs on military installations that are equivalent to programs on traditional campuses. More specifically, the principles are intended to:

- help define the parameters of excellence in voluntary higher education programs on military installations;
- stimulate dialogue on how to strengthen and improve the quality of these programs and services; and
- ensure that these programs continue to evolve as part of the mainstream of adult and higher education.

When a MIVER is conducted, the review team provides findings and recommendations to the college/university and the installation commander. Historically, the institutions are generally receptive to findings and take the required measures to address program issues that would otherwise lead the program to be considered for "delisting." Findings address such areas as adequacy of office space, key staff vacancies, disparities in resources, and inadequate library resources, connectivity and/or customer support. The Department of Education is responsible for curriculum accreditation; therefore, curriculum is not assessed during MIVERs.

The current MIVER contract will end on December 31, 2010. DOD is in the process of soliciting for a new third-party review that will begin in 2011. The new review expands the scope of the MIVER to include all institutions participating in the Department of Defense (DOD) Tuition Assistance Program and not just those institutions operating on a military base. [See page 15.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY DR. SNYDER

Dr. SNYDER. What counseling support is provided to servicemembers? What are the qualifications of educational counselors? To what extent have the number of counselors on military installations been reduced over the past five years? If so, why? Is counseling being replaced by Web-based services or other methods?

Secretary GORDON. DOD provides counseling support and information on educational topics such as:

- Schools and admissions requirements
 - School curriculum
 - Accreditation and transferability of courses and credits
 - Non-traditional credit for college courses through testing, such as: the College-Level Examination Program or CLEP tests; the Prometric DSST Exams (formally known as the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Subject Standardized Tests); and the American Council on Education (ACE) Military credit recommendations
 - School tuition costs and financial assistance to include military tuition assistance (TA), loans, and grants
 - Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Benefits: GI BILL and Post-9/11 GI BILL
- Counseling and education technicians provide support at Services' Education Centers on military installations. Counseling support is also provided to servicemembers via the Services' Web portals and call centers.

Counselors have at least a bachelor's degree with appropriate standard education requirements* and a counseling practicum. Grade levels range from General Schedule (GS)-9 through GS-12 for counselors and education technicians range from GS 7-9.

DOD policy prescribes that educational counseling shall be provided to servicemembers, but does not specify the method. The Services each manage their manpower and implement the DOD policy on counseling services. The Services' reductions in manpower and methods of delivering counseling services are attached.

Dr. SNYDER. Does DOD have a system in place to alert military installation education center directors about any Department of Education or other government reviews, investigations, or regulatory actions pending that pertain to institutions of higher education? What about if accrediting organizations place schools on probation?

Secretary GORDON. No, DOD does not have a formal notification system to alert education centers about federal reviews, investigations, or regulatory actions pending that pertain to institutions of higher education. However, DOD has a contract with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the American Association of Community Colleges for the Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC). SOC advocates for and communicates the needs of the military community with the higher education community. SOC is a consortium of more than 1,900 colleges and universities that provide educational opportunities for servicemembers around the world. SOC monitors these schools, which could include their accreditation status, and serves as the DOD liaison to resolve concerns and share program information to strengthen education relationships with DOD. If a school loses their accreditation status, they will also lose their SOC membership. When this occurs, SOC notifies OSD, the Services, and the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). The Services inform the installations so they can make adjustments to their tuition assistance management system. DANTES informs the installations through their monthly newsletter, the DANTES Information Bulletin.

Dr. SNYDER. Can you please describe how the proposed Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) process will be implemented? How many reviews do you plan to conduct each year? When will reviews begin? How will installations and colleges be selected? How frequently will installations and colleges be reviewed? What criteria will be used in reviewing the quality of distance learning programs?

Secretary GORDON. The process will be implemented in a manner similar to the current process of Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER). MIVER is a contracted program, conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE) since 1991. The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support

(DANTES) manages the contract for DOD. The current contract expires December 2010 and a new Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) contract will be obtained through the DOD acquisition process and awarded during Fiscal Year 2011.

As per the current MIVER process the new MVER will assess the quality of voluntary education programs received by the servicemembers using tuition assistance and assist in the improvement of voluntary education programs through appropriate recommendations to institutions. However, the new review process will be expanded to three types of reviews: an installation with multiple institutions on the base; distance learning institutions; and off-base traditional institutions. Sites and schools will be nominated by the Services and provided to the contractor. Currently there is an on-going competitive solicitation for the new third-party review. Due to contract sensitivity and non-release of the Request for Proposal, details of the process to include frequency of reviews, type of review and specific criteria cannot be disclosed.

Dr. SNYDER. A key component of the Department's proposed policy change for the Voluntary Education Program is to require institutions that receive tuition assistance to agree to certain commitments and sign a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOD. The Department has indicated that allegations of not following the agreements in an MOU will be submitted and handled through the Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES) and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organizations. How will the Department and Services identify potential "allegations" of not following the agreements in MOUs? What procedures and mechanisms will the Department and the Services implement to monitor adherence to MOUs?

Secretary GORDON. The Department and the Services will identify potential "allegations" of not following the agreements in the MOUs through two methods. The non-compliance relating to the MOU could be disclosed during the new review process, the Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) or reported by a servicemember to an educational official at the installation Education Office. For example, if a servicemember makes an allegation to a guidance counselor or the education services specialist at the education center on a military base, the government employee would assist the servicemember in first resolving the issue with the school. If the counselor cannot resolve the issue, it would be brought to the attention of the Education Services Officer (ESO). The ESO would contact the school or the accrediting agency. If need be, the ESO would raise the issue to their higher headquarters and Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC).

All MOU non-compliance issues will be further investigated and handled as described below. The following steps will be taken if a potential allegation is made against an institution with a signed MOU with DOD that is on the published list of institutions in good standing participating in the Military Tuition Assistance (TA) program.

a) The installation and/or Service will confirm violations or complaints and attempt to resolve. If a resolution cannot be reached, the issue will be elevated to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Voluntary Education Office.

b) OSD will contact an appropriate authority within the institution to attempt to rectify the situation.

c) If agreement between the offending institution and OSD can be resolved and the alleged violation is corrected, the matter is recorded and filed for record.

d) If resolution cannot be achieved or violations appear major in scope, then OSD will request the Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) to assist.

e) OSD will request SOC to send a letter addressed to the institution's president or chief executive officer with detailed information regarding the alleged violation or violations and request that the institution investigate the situation and respond to the SOC regarding ways to resolve the allegation.

f) If the violation or violations appear major in scope, the SOC may consult with the institution's accrediting agency and receive that agency's advice on appropriate resolution of the offending situation.

g) A reasonable response time will be specified with an alleged offending institution to allow for sufficient investigation and resolution of the situation.

h) If satisfactory resolution can be achieved, correspondence involving the situation will be filed with the SOC with a copy sent to OSD.

i) If attempts to resolve a violation, as outlined above, have failed and the member institution remains in violation, OSD will take action to terminate the MOU with the institution.

Termination of an institutional MOU will result in its being removed from the "list" of institutions in good standing and placed on a "delist". Notification will go to the Services and installations. Delisted schools will not be allowed to participate in the tuition assistance program.

Dr. SNYDER. What plans, if any, do you have to begin collecting data and monitoring servicemembers' enrollment in for-profit schools?

Secretary GORDON. Currently, DOD does not have plans to collect data and monitor servicemembers' enrollment in for-profit schools. All institutions are treated equally; Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) does not identify schools as state-supported (public), independent (non-profit) or proprietary (for-profit). Currently, the Services are analyzing the list of colleges that are authorized tuition assistance for our servicemembers to identify the type of school.

All servicemember participation, course enrollments, and course completions are monitored by the OSD and the Services. The Voluntary Education Management Information System (VEMIS) electronically consolidates servicemember participation into one annual report. The VEMIS report rolls up Service-specific data on items such as: number of participants, number of enrollments, number of completions, types of degrees, certifications, foreign languages, personnel data, and related costs associated with providing education opportunities on installations worldwide. The system also includes tailored queries and reports using either current or historical VEMIS data to monitor the tuition assistance.

Dr. SNYDER. Data provided by the Army and Navy suggest that completion rates are lower for distance learning courses. Are completion rates lower for distance learning courses? Why is this? Are you seeing any decrease in completion rates over the past several years?

Secretary GORDON. Yes, completion rates are lower for distance learning courses. Our military students face very different challenges than civilian counterparts enrolled in postsecondary courses. Interruptions such as the military mission, deployments, and transfers make course completions very difficult. There is increased participation in distance learning courses and online education programs. DOD recognizes the importance of successful completion rates.

The Army and the Navy completion rates for the distance learning courses are attached.

Dr. SNYDER. Should the Department of Defense and the Services do more to monitor the recruiting practices of colleges that target servicemembers? If so, what steps will you take to increase monitoring efforts?

Secretary GORDON. Currently, the monitoring of college recruitment practices is done at every level in the Department of Defense (DOD): the installation education center, education officers, installation base commanders, the Services, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

As it stands now, the only schools that are invited onto the base (i.e. to conduct education fairs or to counsel their current students), or have memorandums of understanding with the base commander to operate on the base, are permitted to market their programs on base. If aggressive recruiting practices occur on a military base, the commander of the installation may ban the institution or recruiter from the base. In addition, DOD will then request the servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) provide the institution the "Military Student Bill of Rights" containing the standards of good practice for educational recruitment and enrollment of servicemembers.

Dr. SNYDER. What is the impact, if any, of Joint basing on installation education centers?

Secretary GORDON. There is no impact of Joint basing on installation education centers. This is due to the fact that Voluntary Education funding is not a base operating supply (BOS) funded function nor is it considered a community service. Consequently, education centers are not included in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 Joint Base implementation.

Dr. SNYDER. To what extent, if any, are servicemembers taking out education loans or using their own funds to pay for college education expenses? Do you have a means of checking on this?

Secretary GORDON. Currently, there is no tracking mechanism in the case that servicemembers take out education loans or use their own funds to pay for college education expenses. DOD policy sets uniform tuition assistance levels and periodically reviews these levels to ensure the assistance provides ample tuition, limiting the need for servicemembers to have to pay for their off-duty education with their own funds.

Under the current uniform Tuition Assistance (TA) policy, which commenced in Fiscal Year 2003, all servicemember participants may receive up to \$4,500 of assistance per fiscal year with an individual course cost cap of \$250 per semester hour.

Dr. SNYDER. Are complaints about higher education institutions tracked and shared across the Services and education centers?

Secretary GORDON. Yes, they are tracked and shared across the Service and the education centers. We have three approaches in handling the allegations:

- Contacting the school and/or accrediting agency for resolution and requesting the school/agency provide a formal response to the allegations and corrective actions taken.
 - Providing Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) with documentation and requesting they contact the institution for resolution. All investigations are recorded in the SOC Quarterly Report. A copy of the report is sent to OSD and the Services.
 - Presenting the allegations to the Department of Education.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint or allegation, the following parties could be involved in resolving the issue:
- Guidance counselor: If a servicemember complains and/or makes an allegation to a guidance counselor or education officer on a military base the government employee assists the servicemember in resolving the issues with the schools. Depending on the allegation the counselor may contact the school, registrar, and/or accounting office of the school for the student. If the counselor cannot resolve the issue it would be brought to the attention of the Education Service Officer.
 - Education Service Officer (ESO): The ESO communicates with the school and/or accrediting agency. If need be, the ESO raises the issue to their higher headquarters and Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC).
 - Installation commander: The commander has the authority to deny access to the base and control marketing initiatives. All institutions operating on a base must be invited (i.e. for an education fair) or have an MOU with the base. If aggressive marketing allegations towards a school are founded the commander will demand immediate removal from the base.

SOC advocates for and communicates the needs of the military community with the higher education community. SOC ensures institutions are responsive to the special needs of the servicemembers; assists the higher education community to understand the requirements of the military; and serves as the DOD liaison with institutions to resolve concerns and share program information to strengthen education relationships with DOD. School allegations brought to the attention of SOC are investigated and resolved.

Dr. SNYDER. What counseling support is provided to servicemembers? What are the qualifications of educational counselors? To what extent have the number of counselors on military installations been reduced over the past five years? If so, why? Is counseling being replaced by Web-based services or other methods?

Secretary STAMILIO. Counselors are responsible for assisting soldiers to establish their long- and short-range educational goals. Once goals have been established and documented, and the soldier and ACES counselor agree on the appropriate programs and services needed to attain those goals, follow-on counseling is provided as necessary or as requested by the soldier. Tuition Assistance (TA) is authorized for courses offered by institutions that are accredited by regional or national accrediting agencies recognized by the Department of Education. Counseling information is provided via several means: face-to-face, virtually through the GoArmyEd Web portal, telephonic, and email. Army counselors attempt to meet the counseling and information needs of soldiers through any and all means possible. Electronic communication is an effective tool in keeping soldiers informed and up-to-date on benefits, services and their individual progress.

Counselors are Department of the Army civilians in the GS-1740 career field, with a minimum educational requirement of a BA/BS Degree in counseling or a degree with a curriculum containing 24 semester hours of adult education courses. A practicum in counseling is required or a two-year Department of the Army approved intern program. Most careerists in the series have earned a master's degree.

As a result of significant budgetary constraints that led to major staffing cuts within Army Education centers worldwide, starting in 2005, Army decided to centralize a number of administrative functions and operations (e.g., tuition assistance) as well as leverage technology and the efficiencies that could be gained thereby. The goal has been to create a more modern and holistic approach to providing counseling and educational support services; one that enhances soldiers' access to educational tools and information resources that are available 24/7/365. Since 2005, 233 counseling and other staff/support positions have been eliminated in installation Army Education Centers. Currently there are 269 authorized Department of Army Civilian Employee Education Center staff (counselors, education specialists, education officers and administrative assistants), supported by approximately 390 contractors, working in Army's 116 Army Education Centers around the world. Counseling is not being replaced by technology and Web-based services in Army Education Centers; rather counseling is supported by these tools to help ensure access for all soldiers regardless of location of assignment or time of day. The need for education coun-

seling is more important than ever as soldiers are faced with a tremendous amount of online and other detailed and confusing advertising information regarding educational opportunities. Senior Army leaders and subject matter experts are currently analyzing data and resources in detail, with the express purpose of coming up with a comprehensive solution for “right-sizing” the counseling staffs for all Army Education Centers.

Dr. SNYDER. Does DOD have a system in place to alert military installation education center directors about any Department of Education or other government reviews, investigations, or regulatory actions pending that pertain to institutions of higher education? What about if accrediting organizations place schools on probation?

Secretary STAMILIO. The Army, through its GoArmyEd portal, has established an interface with the U.S. Department of Education to receive a data feed of school information called the Postsecondary Education Participants System (PEPS). Contained in the PEPS data are the institution’s accrediting agency and an indicator as to whether the school’s accreditation is still active. The U.S. Department of Education updates the PEPS data weekly.

The Army closely monitors the accreditation status of any institution that has been placed on probation by its accrediting agency. Additionally, if the school is a member of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), Army would request that SOC conduct an inquiry as to the reasons for the school’s probationary status in order to ensure that no potential harm would come to soldiers and/or to prevent any violations of tuition assistance policies and procedures. Should the institution lose its accreditation, the school would be immediately deactivated and removed from the GoArmyEd portal. Once removed, soldiers would no longer be able to access information about the school through the GoArmyEd portal nor would they be able to receive tuition assistance funds in order to attend any deactivated school.

Dr. SNYDER. Can you please describe how the proposed Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) process will be implemented? How many reviews do you plan to conduct each year? When will reviews begin? How will installations and colleges be selected? How frequently will installations and colleges be reviewed? What criteria will be used in reviewing the quality of distance learning programs?

Secretary STAMILIO. The current process, Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER), is a contracted program, conducted by the American Council on Education since 1991. The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) manages the contract for DOD. The current contract expires December 2010. A new Military Voluntary Review contract will be obtained through the DOD Acquisition process and awarded during Fiscal Year 2011.

We expect the function of the new Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) to be similar to the MIVER function. However, since DOD is currently going through the acquisition process, details of the new review are not finalized. The new process will assess the quality of voluntary education programs received by the servicemembers using tuition assistance and assist in the improvement of voluntary education programs through appropriate recommendations to institutions. There will be three types of reviews: installation with multiple institutions operating on the base; distance learning; and off-base traditional institutions. Sites and schools will be nominated by the Services and provided to the contractor.

The number of MVERs to be conducted annually will be based upon available funding.

Dr. SNYDER. A key component of the Department’s proposed policy change for the Voluntary Education Program is to require institutions that receive tuition assistance to agree to certain commitments and sign a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOD. The Department has indicated that allegations of not following the agreements in an MOU will be submitted and handled through the Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES) and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organizations. How will the Department and Services identify potential “allegations” of not following the agreements in MOUs? What procedures and mechanisms will the Department and the Services implement to monitor adherence to MOUs?

Secretary STAMILIO. Feedback provided by soldiers and Education Center personnel will be the primary means for identifying allegations. The following steps will be taken if an allegation is made against an institution that has a signed MOU with DOD:

1. Installation and/or Service will investigate and confirm violations/complaints and attempt to resolve. If resolution cannot be resolved at this level, the issue will be elevated to Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Voluntary Education Office.
2. OSD will consult with Office of General Counsel for advice and contact an appropriate authority within the institution and attempt to rectify the situation.

3. If agreement between the offending institution and OSD can be resolved, and the alleged violation corrected, the matter is documented for record.

4. If resolution cannot be achieved or violations appear to be major in scope, then OSD will request Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) to assist.

5. OSD will request that SOC send a letter that is addressed to the institution's president or chief executive officer with detailed information regarding the alleged violation or violations and request that the institution investigate the situation and respond to SOC regarding ways to resolve the allegation.

6. If the violation or violations appear to be major in scope, the SOC may consult with the institution's accrediting agency and receive that agency's advice on appropriate resolution of the offending situation.

7. A reasonable response time will be specified with an alleged offending institution to allow for sufficient investigation and resolution of the situation.

8. If satisfactory resolution can be achieved, correspondence involving the situation will be filed with the SOC with a copy sent to OSD.

9. If the attempts, as outlined above, fail to bring about a satisfactory resolution to the alleged violation(s), and if the member institution continues to remain in violation, OSD will take action to terminate the institution's MOU after consulting with OGC.

10. Termination of an institutional MOU will result in the school being removed from the "list" of institutions in "good standing." This institution will then be placed on the "de-listed" notification report that will be promptly distributed to the Services and installations. De-listed schools will not be allowed to participate in the Tuition Assistance program.

Dr. SNYDER. What plans, if any, do you have to begin collecting data and monitoring servicemembers' enrollment in for-profit schools?

Secretary STAMILIO. Currently, the Army monitors soldiers' participation, course enrollments, and course completions through the GoArmyEd portal. This automated system has the functionality to provide enrollment, expenditures, and completion rates by school. In FY 2011, Army will begin to regularly monitor these categories of data in order to identify trends and patterns that pertain to for profit, non-profit, classroom based as well as distance learning schools. Trends and patterns will then be analyzed and the results of these analyses will be incorporated in our ongoing program improvement plans.

Dr. SNYDER. Data provided by the Army and Navy suggest that completion rates are lower for distance learning courses. Are completion rates lower for distance learning courses? Why is this? Are you seeing any decrease in completion rates over the past several years?

Secretary STAMILIO. The completion rates for distance learning are slightly lower for distance learning courses when compared to traditional classroom-based courses. During FY07-09, the completion rate for distance learning courses was 86%, compared to the 89% for traditional courses during the same time period.

The reason for a lower completion rate can be attributed to the fact that distance learning courses require a more disciplined student to be successful. Individual student factors may include the lack of academic preparedness, student support not readily available, and the student's learning style may not be conducive for distance learning courses. Other factors may include interruptions such as the military mission, deployments, transfers, or family obligations which make course completions very difficult. During the last ten years, the Army's operational tempo has increased and soldiers have been deployed multiple times.

The completion rates for distance learning have remained steady during FY07-09 (FY07-87%, FY08-85%, FY09-86%).

Dr. SNYDER. Should the Department of Defense and the Services do more to monitor the recruiting practices of colleges that target servicemembers? If so, what steps will you take to increase monitoring efforts?

Secretary STAMILIO. The monitoring of institutions is worked diligently throughout the Army, especially in the installation education centers through Guidance Counselors, Education Services Officers, other education center personnel, and the Installation Commanders. Feedback from soldiers regarding potential overly aggressive/marketing efforts by a school would also be followed up.

There are occasional instances where institutions may exceed their bounds in marketing and recruiting. It is made clear that institutions may only market and recruit for their programs by invitation of the Installation Commander. An overly aggressive institution may make offers to Education Services Officers (ESO) in exchange for use of education center space to market their program and recruit soldiers and Family Members. In those instances, ESOs must decline any requests by these institutions to access their education centers for the purpose of marketing/recruiting. The institutions may however, by invitation of the ESO, leave approved in-

formational brochures, flyers, pamphlets, and even school applications in the education center. Identified questionable marketing practices committed by online institutions will be reported up through the Education Center chain of command to Army and DOD Headquarters. SOC will be asked for assistance in instances in which the offending school is a SOC member.

Dr. SNYDER. What is the impact, if any, of Joint basing on installation education centers?

Secretary STAMILIO. No impact. Voluntary Education remains service based because it was not considered a common installation management function. The Army and each of the other Services maintain responsibility for support and management of their own respective education centers on Joint bases.

Dr. SNYDER. To what extent, if any, are servicemembers taking out education loans or using their own funds to pay for college education expenses? Do you have a means of checking on this?

Secretary STAMILIO. The Army does not track whether soldiers take out education loans or use their own funds to pay for tuition. The Army does, however, review the Uniform Tuition Assistance (TA) Policy periodically to ensure that the assistance provided is sufficient so that the majority of servicemembers do not have to pay for their off-duty education out of their own pocket.

Under the current uniform Tuition Assistance (TA) policy all soldiers may receive up to \$4,500 of TA per fiscal year; individual course costs have a \$250 per semester hour cap.

In 2009, an all-Service task force led by OSD reviewed the cost of attending school and the tuition assistance policy. The outcome of the review revealed that:

- 80% of all students were attending schools that charged at or under the semester hour cap. The other 20% of the servicemembers have other options (including combining TA and GI Bill and/or Pell Grants); they select the institution they attend. There are ample institutions offering similar degree programs at institutions that are within the cap.
- The \$250 per semester hour cap covers the cost of almost all undergraduate tuition expenses.

Dr. SNYDER. Are complaints about higher education institutions tracked and shared across the Services and education centers?

Secretary STAMILIO. Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) ensures that institutions are responsive to the special needs of the servicemembers; assists the higher education community to understand the requirements of the military; and serves as the Army/DOD liaison with institutions to resolve concerns and share program information to strengthen education relationships with the Army/DOD. School allegations brought to the attention of SOC are investigated and resolved. All investigations are recorded in the SOC Quarterly Report. A copy of the report is sent to the OSD and the Services.

Dr. SNYDER. What counseling support is provided to servicemembers? What are the qualifications of educational counselors? To what extent have the number of counselors on military installations been reduced over the past five years? If so, why? Is counseling being replaced by Web-based services or other methods?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Navy College Offices provide face-to-face counseling support and information to sailors on 36 major Navy installations. Counselors, classified in the federal civilian General Schedule 1740 series, a professional series for education administration and counseling, provide information on which programs meet sailors' educational goals, cost and time to complete degree requirements and transferability of course and program credits to higher level degree programs. In FY2009, 217,000 counseling sessions were recorded by Navy College Counselors. They processed 125,000 Tuition Assistance (TA) requests for 57,400 sailors. Navy's Virtual Education Center (VEC), established in July 2010, conducts virtual counseling sessions, processes all Web-based TA applications, updates Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcripts (SMART), authenticates degrees and communicates general information.

Our approach to counseling services has changed, but the importance we place on counseling has not. Our Navy College Office and VEC counselors remain the single most valuable asset to the Navy College Program. Between FY 2005 and 2009, the number of Voluntary Education (VOLED) counselors on installations ranged between 167 in FY05 and 179 in FY09. On the average, two-thirds of counseling support was provided by contract counselors. However, in FY 2010, Navy took a holistic approach in transforming our voluntary education program that eliminated contractors, increasing federal employees to support counseling and testing requirements, and leveraged technology to enhance sailor access to educational support tools and information. This resulted in a net reduction of 57 counselors. Overall, the capability to support sailors was enhanced. One key feature of our transformation was

opening a state-of-the-art VEC. This allowed Navy to centralize support functions, such as processing TA and updating SMART, authenticating college transcripts for military personnel and providing additional time for counseling at the installation level. The VEC is staffed by 8 counselors and 18 education technicians who provide easy access to a one-stop-shopping for virtual counseling and educational information and currently operates 15 hours/day (0600–2100) to accommodate the different time zones around the world.

Dr. SNYDER. Does DOD have a system in place to alert military installation education center directors about any Department of Education or other government reviews, investigations, or regulatory actions pending that pertain to institutions of higher education? What about if accrediting organizations place schools on probation?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), a consortium of approximately 1900 colleges and universities, monitors its member academic institutions. When allegations are levied against an institution, or if an institution loses its accreditation, the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Military Services are notified. The Services meet regularly with SOC to address such issues and SOC submits a quarterly report detailing any actions they have taken with regard to academic institutions. This information is shared through the chain of command.

DOD also sponsors a quarterly Inter-Service Working Group in which the Services share pertinent information on a variety of issues. If there are academic institutions not adhering to the rules, the Services discuss the matter to determine whether the concerns are DOD-wide or limited to a single Service or location. Prior to authorizing Tuition Assistance (TA), Virtual Education Center (VEC) and Navy College Office (NCO) staffs routinely check the Department of Education Web site to verify the accreditation status of academic institutions. SOC or Navy's Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) Distance Learning program manager notify the VEC/NCO of an institution's loss of accreditation for MOU/on-based schools or Navy Distance Learning Partners. Once loss of accreditation is confirmed, the school is not permitted to receive TA or conduct classes on the installation.

Dr. SNYDER. Can you please describe how the proposed Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) process will be implemented? How many reviews do you plan to conduct each year? When will reviews begin? How will installations and colleges be selected? How frequently will installations and colleges be reviewed? What criteria will be used in reviewing the quality of distance learning programs?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. The proposed Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER), like the current Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER), is a contracted program. However, since the MVER statement of work has not yet been finalized, I am currently unable to share specific detail on the criteria for reviews. The MVER contract start date is planned for January 2012, and Navy, as the DANTES DOD Executive Agent, will fund the reviews, with the number of reviews dependent upon funding availability. Three types of reviews will be conducted: on-base, off-base, and distance learning programs. On-base MVERs will be Service specific with the individual Service identifying installations selected for review. Off-base and distance learning reviews will be conducted on a DOD-wide basis, with institutions selected by a DOD Inter-Service Working Group.

Dr. SNYDER. A key component of the Department's proposed policy change for the Voluntary Education Program is to require institutions that receive tuition assistance to agree to certain commitments and sign a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOD. The Department has indicated that allegations of not following the agreements in an MOU will be submitted and handled through the Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES) and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organizations. How will the Department and Services identify potential "allegations" of not following the agreements in MOUs? What procedures and mechanisms will the Department and the Services implement to monitor adherence to MOUs?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Navy receives formal announcements from Department of Education (DOE), DANTES, SOC, and other accrediting boards. Additionally, adherence is monitored at the execution level by the Navy College Offices. Institutions that do not comply with the MOUs are either asked to leave the base or no longer remain part of the Navy College Program Distance Learning Partnership.

Dr. SNYDER. What plans, if any, do you have to begin collecting data and monitoring servicemembers' enrollment in for-profit schools?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Navy already tracks education data through the Navy College Management Information System (NCMIS). It is a management tool that provides a complete history of courses funded through Tuition Assistance (TA). This includes grades and degrees earned, completion rates, rank/rate, pay grade, academic institution(s) attended, type of course (distance learning or traditional), level of degree (AS/

BS/MS/PHD), expenditures, credits earned and approved education plans. NCMIS has the functionality to provide these same performance measures for public, non-profit and for-profit institutions. Navy is currently analyzing the list of colleges that are authorized TA for our sailors to identify the type of school (public, non-profit, or for-profit). Once this list is complete, NCMIS will be updated. Targeted completion date is Jan 2011.

Navy is actively engaged in the review of VOLED performance indicators. Costs, participation and enrollment are assessed monthly. Course completion rates are reviewed semiannually. Academic institutional data is presented annually at a variety of forums to include the Council of Colleges and Military Educators (CCME) conference, Academic Council on Military Education (ACME) at the state levels and to DOD as a component of the annual voluntary education report. Academic institutional data is also available to the colleges upon request. Trends are investigated for possible lessons learned or improvements.

Dr. SNYDER. Data provided by the Army and Navy suggest that completion rates are lower for distance learning courses. Are completion rates lower for distance learning courses? Why is this? Are you seeing any decrease in completion rates over the past several years?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. The completion rate for instructor-led courses is higher than for distance learning. In FY09, enlisted sailors took 48,875 undergraduate courses with 43,478 completions recorded. During the same time frame, enlisted sailors took 93,685 distance learning courses with 75,011 completions recorded.

Studies of non-completion rates for courses taken on board ship indicated a variety of causes. Results showed that not all courses should be delivered via distance learning, not all professors are effective at teaching distance learning and some sailors were not disciplined enough to take distance learning courses. For example, highly technical subjects that required the sailor to have a strong background in the material had the highest non-completion rate. Junior sailors were more likely to be unsuccessful than senior sailors. Junior sailors, new to shipboard life, are challenged with acclimation and qualifications for their role on the ship. To help increase the likelihood of success, Navy implemented a new policy that restricts sailors who are within the first year of their first permanent duty station from participating in Navy-funded TA courses. Navy also implemented a distance learning screening tool designed to indicate those sailors who are self-disciplined and have good time management skills.

Because of the increased participation in distance learning courses, Navy continues to pay particular attention to the course completion rates and will implement policy and guidelines as needed to improve every sailor's chance for success.

Dr. SNYDER. Should the Department of Defense and the Services do more to monitor the recruiting practices of colleges that target servicemembers? If so, what steps will you take to increase monitoring efforts?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. We do not believe that additional monitoring steps are required at this time. Current procedures for monitoring recruiting practices for programs offered on Navy installations are considered adequate. We will, however, continue to monitor recruiting practices closely through feedback from the Navy College Office and sailors.

Dr. SNYDER. What is the impact, if any, of Joint basing on installation education centers?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. We have not observed any impact on installation education centers as a result of Joint basing.

Dr. SNYDER. To what extent, if any, are servicemembers taking out education loans or using their own funds to pay for college education expenses? Do you have a means of checking on this?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Navy does not track how sailors pay for expenses above what Navy Tuition Assistance payments cover. Sailors that elect to take graduate degrees and undergraduate courses that exceed the DOD cap of \$250 per credit hour are responsible for payment that exceeds Tuition Assistance thresholds. Additionally, sailors electing to exceed the 16 semester hour cap established by the Navy are responsible for any additional tuition costs. Sailors who voluntarily choose to attend these programs or exceed the funded TA cap, seek additional funding in a variety of ways to include GI Bill, Pell Grants, personal loans and personal resources.

Dr. SNYDER. Are complaints about higher education institutions tracked and shared across the Services and education centers?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. The Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organization does provide a quarterly report to the Services if any allegations are addressed at the SOC level. However, complaints are not tracked or shared formally between DOD and the Services.

Dr. SNYDER. Do the other Services have an official transcript service like the Army's American Council on Education Registry Transcript Service (AARTS)?

Mr. LUTTERLOH. Navy has the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) that supports all the sea Services (Navy, USMC and US Coast Guard). SMART is an automated system that documents successfully completed training, grades for completed college courses, scores on academic exams such as College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) and American Council on Education (ACE) recommended credits for successfully completed military training. SMART is the Navy's official transcript and bears ACE's official seal. SMART is available online and can be accessed by the active duty, SELRES or veteran. servicemembers and veterans may request an official transcript be provided to academic institutions through our Virtual Education Center at no cost to the member or the veteran.

Dr. SNYDER. What counseling support is provided to servicemembers? What are the qualifications of educational counselors? To what extent have the number of counselors on military installations been reduced over the past five years? If so, why? Is counseling being replaced by Web-based services or other methods?

Mr. SITTERLY. Counseling is provided at every Air Force Base (AFB) in the world. Qualifications for counselors meet the Office of Personnel Management standard for 1740 series positions—a minimum bachelor's degree and 24 semester hours of credit in education/psychology courses within that degree or beyond. The number of counselors at AFBs has remained relatively stable over the last five years. Air Force is not replacing counseling with computer tools; however, those tools are assisting with information dissemination. Web-based tools are used for general information purposes. Counseling is used to assist airmen with college and degree decisions.

Dr. SNYDER. Does DOD have a system in place to alert military installation education center directors about any Department of Education or other government reviews, investigations, or regulatory actions pending that pertain to institutions of higher education? What about if accrediting organizations place schools on probation?

Mr. SITTERLY. As far as Air Force knows, there is no specific DOD system in place for this kind of alert.

Dr. SNYDER. Can you please describe how the proposed Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) process will be implemented? How many reviews do you plan to conduct each year? When will reviews begin? How will installations and colleges be selected? How frequently will installations and colleges be reviewed? What criteria will be used in reviewing the quality of distance learning programs?

Mr. SITTERLY. The AF does not have this information. Suggest this question be directed to the DOD office of Continuing Education Programs, OUSD (P&R) Military Community and Family Policy, that is working the next contract proposal.

Dr. SNYDER. A key component of the Department's proposed policy change for the Voluntary Education Program is to require institutions that receive tuition assistance to agree to certain commitments and sign a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOD. The Department has indicated that allegations of not following the agreements in an MOU will be submitted and handled through the Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES) and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organizations. How will the Department and Services identify potential "allegations" of not following the agreements in MOUs? What procedures and mechanisms will the Department and the Services implement to monitor adherence to MOUs?

Mr. SITTERLY. This will be a DOD-wide MOU after DODI 1322.25, Voluntary Education Program, is published. Since it is still in the coordination stage there could be changes made to the existing draft that will impact the way this could be monitored. Air Force believes the best way to handle this is for the Services and DOD to sit down and work out a standard process for all the Services to follow after it is finalized.

Dr. SNYDER. What plans, if any, do you have to begin collecting data and monitoring servicemembers' enrollment in for-profit schools?

Mr. SITTERLY. Air Force (AF) has never had a need to identify schools in this manner. We have begun this identification (ID) process and are loading additional data fields in the online system as we work with schools. Any changes like this for the nearly 3,000 civilian schools AF has contact with, takes time to implement. When all schools have an ID loaded into the computer system (estimate one fiscal year), then data can be pulled by this new ID field.

Dr. SNYDER. Data provided by the Army and Navy suggest that completion rates are lower for distance learning courses. Are completion rates lower for distance learning courses? Why is this? Are you seeing any decrease in completion rates over the past several years?

Mr. SITTERLY. Air Force has noted a minimal difference in course completions dependent on course delivery methods: 92% for traditional; 89% for distance learning. Completion rates for college courses in the AF has traditionally been high no matter the delivery system – 90% or above over the last five years.

Dr. SNYDER. Should the Department of Defense and the Services do more to monitor the recruiting practices of colleges that target servicemembers? If so, what steps will you take to increase monitoring efforts?

Mr. SITTERLY. Most recruiting takes place off-base, online or through other methods not within the sight or control of the Services. All on-base recruiting falls under the requirements of DODI 1344.07 AFI 36-2702, *Personal Commercial Solicitation on Air Force Installations* (the Air Force's published implementation and supplementation of the DODI 1344.07, *Personal Commercial Solicitation on DOD Installations*). This Air Force publication provides notice of the Department of Defense and Air Force controls regarding on-base solicitation and includes request, approval, evaluation and complaint processes. The publication will be provided to all schools using the Servicemembers Opportunities College (SOC) communication network, and we will offer to provide clarification upon request.

Dr. SNYDER. What is the impact, if any, of Joint basing on installation education centers?

Mr. SITTERLY. Air Force is not aware of any impacts at this time.

Dr. SNYDER. To what extent, if any, are servicemembers taking out education loans or using their own funds to pay for college education expenses? Do you have a means of checking on this?

Mr. SITTERLY. The Air Force has no current means of determining whether airmen are using education loans and/or their own funds to pay for education expenses.

Dr. SNYDER. Are complaints about higher education institutions tracked and shared across the Services and education centers?

Mr. SITTERLY. There is no formal process for this.

Dr. SNYDER. Do the other Services have an official transcript service like the Army's American Council on Education Registry Transcript Service (AARTS)?

Mr. SITTERLY. The Air Force has an official transcript service within the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). CCAF transcripts enlisted training, evaluated for college credit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) that applies toward CCAF degrees. This service is at no cost to airmen.

Dr. SNYDER. What counseling support is provided to servicemembers? What are the qualifications of educational counselors? To what extent have the number of counselors on military installations been reduced over the past five years? If so, why? Is counseling being replaced by Web-based services or other methods?

Mr. LARSEN. Corps Education Center counselors provide information about college education opportunities to servicemembers during in-person counseling sessions and briefs. Counseling sessions contain additional information about the tuition assistance program, the process involved, and the types of schools that can receive assistance funding. All Education Service Officers (ESOs) have a Bachelor's Degree, eighty-one percent have a Masters degree, and six percent have a Ph.D. Three percent of Education Service Specialists (ESSs) have their Associate's Degree, ninety-seven percent have a Bachelor's Degree, and fifty-six percent have a Master's Degree. The Marine Corps counseling resources have not been reduced in recent years. The Marine Corps has no plans to replace counseling with Web-based services or other methods.

Dr. SNYDER. Does DOD have a system in place to alert military installation education center directors about any Department of Education or other government reviews, investigations, or regulatory actions pending that pertain to institutions of higher education? What about if accrediting organizations place schools on probation?

Mr. LARSEN. OSD will answer this question.

Dr. SNYDER. Can you please describe how the proposed Military Voluntary Education Review (MVER) process will be implemented? How many reviews do you plan to conduct each year? When will reviews begin? How will installations and colleges be selected? How frequently will installations and colleges be reviewed? What criteria will be used in reviewing the quality of distance learning programs?

Mr. LARSEN. OSD will answer this question.

Dr. SNYDER. A key component of the Department's proposed policy change for the Voluntary Education Program is to require institutions that receive tuition assistance to agree to certain commitments and sign a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOD. The Department has indicated that allegations of not following the agreements in an MOU will be submitted and handled through the Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES) and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organizations. How will the Depart-

ment and Services identify potential “allegations” of not following the agreements in MOUs? What procedures and mechanisms will the Department and the Services implement to monitor adherence to MOUs?

Mr. LARSEN. OSD will answer this question.

Dr. SNYDER. What plans, if any, do you have to begin collecting data and monitoring servicemembers’ enrollment in for-profit schools?

Mr. LARSEN. Marine Corps currently collects data on servicemembers’ participation, enrollments, and course completions. We do not specifically identify institutions of higher learning as for-profit, non-profit, or state supported.

Dr. SNYDER. Data provided by the Army and Navy suggest that completion rates are lower for distance learning courses. Are completion rates lower for distance learning courses? Why is this? Are you seeing any decrease in completion rates over the past several years?

Mr. LARSEN. The Marine Corps has not seen a decrease in completion rates for distance learning courses over the past several years.

Dr. SNYDER. Should the Department of Defense and the Services do more to monitor the recruiting practices of colleges that target servicemembers? If so, what steps will you take to increase monitoring efforts?

Mr. LARSEN. The Marine Corps monitors colleges’ recruiting practices by requiring all educational institutions that come on to the base to meet with the Education Service Officers (ESOs) and establish an agreement prior to contacting potential students. The installation commander has primacy over any incidents of aggressive marketing. Actions to address this issue include referring the issue to the command’s Inspector General and/or restricting an educational institution’s access to the installation and marines.

Dr. SNYDER. What is the impact, if any, of Joint basing on installation education centers?

Mr. LARSEN. There has not been an impact on the Marine Corps since we do not participate in any Joint basing of installation education centers.

Dr. SNYDER. To what extent, if any, are servicemembers taking out education loans or using their own funds to pay for college education expenses? Do you have a means of checking on this?

Mr. LARSEN. Using personal loans or personal funds for education expenses is not tracked by the Marine Corps since it is considered to be a personal matter. However, the USMC will continue to make our servicemembers aware of our Tuition Assistance Program (TA).

Dr. SNYDER. Are complaints about higher education institutions tracked and shared across the Services and education centers?

Mr. LARSEN. OSD will answer this question.

Dr. SNYDER. Do the other Services have an official transcript service like the Army’s American Council on Education Registry Transcript Service (AARTS)?

Mr. LARSEN. The Marine Corps and the Navy developed the Sailor and Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) to document military education and experience.

SMART records recommend college credit for military occupational skills, formal military schools, Marine Corps Institute courses, Defense Language Proficiency Tests, DANTES Standardized Subject Tests, and College Level Examination Program examinations. Validated by the American Council on Education, SMART may be submitted directly to a college or university for recommended college credits.