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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
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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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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.