



CAMP LEJEUNE & MCAS NEW RIVER
EDUCATION ASSISTANCE BRANCH
PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
MARINE & FAMILY PROGRAMS, MCCS

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EDUCATION ADVISORY

State of tuition assistance for 2012

We would like to thank all of our customers for their patience with the confusing changes to Tuition Assistance this October.

For those not familiar with the situation, last year 54 million dollars were spent on the Tuition Assistance program. This year only 29 million dollars were allocated for Tuition Assistance. In an attempt to provide some funding to as many Marines as possible, Marine Corps Headquarters attempted to make sweeping changes to the program. While some of the changes were reasonable as they related to ensuring TA users were meeting their military commitments prior to beginning a voluntary education program, changes to the dollar amounts available and restrictive credit limits were not so well received.

Later in October Marine Corps Headquarters restored all benefit levels to FY11 levels (\$250/credit, \$4500/year) with the exception of reverting the per credit cap on graduate programs to the FY10 level of \$250 per semester credit. While this decision was well received across the Marine Corp, there is some concern that Marines aren't aware that the total funding available for the program has not increased.

Tuition Assistance will likely run out of money before the end of the fiscal year this year. With only 29 million dollars we may very well not have funding by this summer. That means it is more important than ever that Marines make themselves aware of the other funding sources available to them. While some would push the use of G.I. Bill benefits, there are a number of additional sources an active duty Marine can go to in search of additional funding for their educational pursuits.

In this newsletter we will attempt to identify some of the avenues Marines should explore before tapping into their G.I. Bill, but these suggestions should not be taken as the limits of what is available. Marines should look to governmental programs such as FAFSA, state programs, and even their schools for possible support. They should also look into alternate methods of taking classes such as CLEP Testing, Military training and taking general education courses for transfer at less expensive institutions.

While it may mean extra work, financial assistance requires a commensurate amount effort to obtain.

Submissions, requests and comments welcome!

Here at Education Assistance, our goal in publishing a newsletter is to provide information regarding our services and to discuss issues relating to continuing education for all service members and their families. We endeavor to provide timely and useful information, but we need your input to help us achieve our goals.

If there is a continuing education topic you would like to read more about or if there is an article or idea you would like to see explored, please let us know. We would also appreciate any constructive comments you have. Please send email to hick-oxjb@usmc-mccs.org or call 910-451-9234. We will ensure that your input is passed to the appropriate people.

Thank you for your readership. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Additional financial aid and where to find it

When you begin your search for additional financial aid, there are a number of factors you should consider and quite a number of places to look.

The first thing you should establish is how much aid you are looking for. There should be a fairly specific dollar amount that you are looking for, and you always want to apply for more aid than that dollar amount. You can always turn awards down, but the closer you get to a funding deadline, the harder it will be to find additional assistance.

The next thing you should consider is the difference between gift based financial aid and need based financial aid. While need based aid looks at your income, gift based aid does not, and if you are making a fair amount of money you may not qualify for as much need based aid as someone else might. Remember that if you earned money in a combat zone in one year, that money is usually not taxable and that your income picture may be changed for many calculations accordingly.

Searching for Financial Aid is very similar to searching for a job. You will often submit many applications to receive a few replies, but the more energy you put into the process, the better your results will be. What you should be considering now that you know how much you need is what things are unique about you that might warrant gift or need based aid. These things are often referred to as “hooks” and they may include things like: What degree are you pursuing? What job do you plan to hold? Where are you and your family from? Are you left-handed? Are there certain companies or products that you like? What aspects of your military service are special? Make a list of your hooks and keep them in mind while searching for aid. Something that you don’t think of as worthy of a scholarship or grant may be something that is funded by some person or organization out there.

Now that you have considered these things, you are ready to start looking into the various books and websites out there that have listings of grants and scholarships. A good place to start first is with the government: www.fafsa.ed.gov is the largest source of need based financial aid available through the Pell Grant. There may be other opportunities that come from this application, and you will probably find yourself qualified for loans, but keep in mind that you do not have to accept them and that this is your first place to look, not your last.

The next place you should look are your state .gov websites. You have at minimum three states to consider for aid: the state you are stationed in, the state that your school is in, and the state that is your home of record. Any or all of these states may have educational benefits available that you can access. Some states may have restrictions based on your residency or to only schools operating in the state in question, but this process is about finding questions to ask and then getting the answers to them.

Now you may want to go is to speak with your school’s financial aid staff. Most schools will have some staff that can help you access the previously mentioned sources of aid and there may be money available at the school for various students depending on academic performance, activities or other things such as essay writing. You may have a preliminary aid package put together with financial aid on your application, but you should try to remain involved in the process during your entire degree program.

The last thing that will be mentioned, but by no means the last place to look, are the various books and websites collecting funding opportunities. In our office and libraries we have copies of “Peterson’s Complete Guide to Financial Aid” and “Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel and Dependents” as well as a list of safe websites to start searching for funding opportunities. If you would like this list of websites sent to you, please send an email to hickoxjb@usmc-mccs.org and we will be happy to share it with you. Good luck in your financial aid search!

In-state Tuition rates for Active Duty Military

A member of the armed forces on active duty for more than 30 days, their spouse, and their dependent children will be eligible to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state where they reside or are permanently stationed. Once a Service member or their family members are enrolled and paying in-state tuition, they will continue to pay the in-state tuition rate as long as they remain continuously enrolled at the institution even if the Service member is reassigned outside the state.

This change is included in section 135 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137) (HEOA) which was signed into law on August 14, 2008 and amends and extends the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). This requirement applies to all public institutions that receive funds under a program authorized by the HEA.

The Department of Education has worked with the institutions of higher education and is confident they are aware of the changes in the law and are fully implementing the policy. However, as we all know, there is always the chance that someone just doesn't get the word. If this happens, you should contact the financial aid or registrar's office at the institution. You can also contact the Veterans Affairs office at the institution. Even though you are active duty, these offices should be able to assist you.

In the rare cases where these steps don't resolve the situation, please contact the Department of Education's Ombudsman's office (toll-free at 877-557-2575) or via the internet. The online Ombudsman Assistance Request Form can be found at the Office of the Ombudsman website. Both of the following links access complaint information. <https://ombudsman.ed.gov/OmbudsmanWebApp/do?action=getRequest> and <http://www.ombudsman.ed.gov/>.

EDUCATION Assistance WEBSITE CHANGES

Thanks in part to a structural reorganization, we have been busy updating our website, now found at www.mccslejeune.com/edu and have tried to put lots of helpful information up for our customers.

With these changes we are hoping to streamline the services we provide by providing frequently requested forms and information on the website. Now you can find the application for our Military Academic Skills Program, contact information for the US Military Apprenticeship Program and the information for our testing procedures and schedules. We also currently have some additional information available on scholarships, so if you're looking for some additional opportunities, please check it out.

Our website is still the place to find your TA Request Form, and you can find samples for waiver letters as well. We even have step by step instructions along with contact information for our deployed and long distance Marines to help with their TA process.

We welcome feedback, and if there is anything that you would like to see on our website, please let us know. You can call us at 910-451-3091 or send email to hickoxjb@usmc-mccs.org with any comments or suggestions you may have.

We are exploring the option of having a Facebook page, and would love to hear from anyone regarding what kind of content you might like to see. Again, comments and suggestions are welcome.

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Education assistance branch mission statement

The mission of the Education Assistance Branch is to provide personal and professional learning opportunities to the Marine Corps Community, in a consolidated center where facilities are available or through the use of technology for independent duty and deployed personnel. A comprehensive voluntary education program has been established Marine Corps wide to encompass a broad range of learning opportunities based on the needs of the local Marine Corps Community.

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The Education Assistance Branch positively impacts the recruitment, retention, and readiness of active duty Marines and provides Commanders with a valuable tool to prevent problems that detract from unit readiness. Quality of Life is impacted positively as personnel face reduced logistical barriers to reaching their educational goals.



STAR OF The First QUARTER 2011: Paul Parker

Paul is an outstanding employee and a great example for all our staff. He has a great attitude and is one of the first to volunteer when something needs to be done. You can tell he enjoys his job he will go out of his way to help a customer, or a staff member with whatever they need. He is always here in the mornings early and ready to administer tests prior to his start time. He stays abreast of all advances regarding the tests that he administers, and when anything new comes along in testing he is the first to investigate. He administered over 800 tests, including Armed Forces Classification Test that allows members to submit for other military jobs and programs to be an even bigger part of the military mission.

Paul stepped up to the plate and moved all testing computers and equipment, when it had to be moved from testing because of the air conditioning problem. When things at Fort Bragg changed because of funding he did and is still doing his best to fit the Soldiers in -working around the Marines that have priority. When MARSOC had hundreds of Marines to test he maneuvered his schedule to accommodate their schedules. He has taken on multiple collateral duties in addition to his regular responsibilities.

He assisted in the enrollment of students in MASP with over 250 per quarter furthering their academic goals while still active or at the end of service. He keeps up with the IT troubleshooting requirements of the John A. Lejeune Education Center. He quickly assesses and corrects IT problems that occur with our wireless system as well as with the college and universities aboard base. When there is a problem with our copier, Paul is called on to try and troubleshoot and if he can't fix it he schedules with the company to come out and check it. He has outstanding knowledge of our rules and regulations, our mission and keeps up-to-date on any changes. He is dedicated to our customers and the Education Assistance mission. He solves problems in testing without requiring instruction from supervisors; he is very trustworthy; and knows his goals both short and long term, as well as, our branch's goals.