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Leadership Scholar program helps Marines prepare for college life out of the Corps

Cpl. Jenn Calaway
Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — For those military members looking to continue their education after they move on from the Marine Corps, the Leadership Scholar Program essentially serves as “the foot-in-the-door,” expediting the process for college and university admission. The LSP basically helps a student along the way, in what can be a long and confusing process choosing an education path.

Under the LSP, Marines can attend nearly one hundred colleges and universities spread all throughout the United States, making this opportunity hard to ignore.

Applicants must be active duty, reserve or veteran Marines who are planning to attend a school as a freshman or transfer student. If an applicant is an active duty Marine, they must be honorably discharged before the beginning of the school semester they plan to attend.

“The LSP works with colleges and universities around the country to expedite the admission process for Marines,” said Beth Morgan, director, Higher Education Initiative, LSP. “The advantage of working through the LSP versus applying on their own is that with the LSP, the college or university may guarantee admission to

Marines who meet their standards. Even where there is no guarantee, LSP has established direct lines of communication with the admission office and an LSP recommendation adds significant weight to the application.”

Once contact with the school is established and a Marine is enrolled, students essentially live a normal college life.

“Institutions dictate all academic criteria, along with residency and other requirements; and establish all documentation deadlines, processing timelines, and reporting instructions,” Morgan said. “Institutions will also decide how many LSP applicants they will accept each year.”

Former Marine Sgt. Nicholas Keith has attended college through the LSP program since 2009. “It’s the most advantageous decision I’ve ever made,” said Keith, a student at Chico State, located in Chico, Calif. “I never would have been able to get my bachelors degree if it weren’t for this program and now I’m going to be the first person in my family to ever graduate college.”

“The LSP is available to help Marines who want to continue their education and become better prepared to compete in today’s tough job market,” Morgan said.

After an interview process, students are asked to provide: a Screening Board Report

(from chain of command -- model would be a meritorious promotion board report), a copy of High School transcripts (unofficial), a copy of college transcripts (unofficial), SMART Transcript, certified true copies of Record Of Service, Basic Individual Record, Basic Training Record, awards page, and education record, Letters of Recommendation (optional) and a personal essay of 250 words about their desire to participate in the program.

“Since we kicked off the LSP in October, we’ve got roughly 40 students utilizing the program in colleges and universities as we speak,” said Morgan. “Now we’re just really starting to vamp it up due to the fact we’ve got so many schools actively participating.”

Though students are still required to pay for their actual education, through either the Montgomery G.I. bill or the Post/911 G.I. bill, the cost of the LSP is absolutely free.

“As long as you are approved through your chain of command, its instant access to a university,” said Keith. “After I was done with my interview, I was literally signing up for classes within two days. It’s just amazing ... I love it.”

For more information, contact the LSP at: 760-429-4124 or go to their Web site for detailed information and a contact request form at: <http://www.leadershipscholarprogram.com>.