

College and Certification Tips

for the Military Safety Professional

BCSP | Board of Certified Safety Professionals®



Author bio:

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Josh is someone who fervently believes in the power of safety and health professionals to change the world.

There are many ways to complete and pay for college and professional certifications while serving in the U.S. military. As a 21-year servicemember in the Air Force, I utilized many of the educational and professional certification benefits offered to military members. Below are examples of benefits available that I personally used, how much money I saved, and [LINKS](#) for more information.

- 1. College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams:** These exams cover intro-level college course material. With at least 33 exams available for free to servicemembers, and the potential for three or more college credits with a passing score, this is a must-do for college credit. Between DANTES (see #2) and CLEP, I took 30 (passing 28) exams, which put a huge dent in the credits required for my under-grad degree. [MORE HERE.](#)

Estimated savings: \$2,040 (\$85 x 24 CLEP exams) and at least 18 months of class time.

- 2. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES):** Offering 38 exams through DSST, these exams also confer free college credit similar to CLEP. Free test prep is also available online, via mobile apps, and at installation education centers. [MORE HERE.](#)

Estimated savings: \$480 (\$80 x 6 exams) and at least 6 months of class time.

- 3. Tuition Assistance (TA):** Each servicemember receives up to \$250 per semester credit hour or \$166 per quarter credit hour toward tuition, with fiscal year cap of \$4,500 to use toward an accredited undergrad or graduate degree. If the \$4,500 isn't used, it virtually disappears with end of the fiscal year. I earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree using TA to fund 95% of the cost (5% was out-of-pocket book costs). [MORE HERE](#).

Estimated savings: \$38,000 (15 undergrad and 16 graduate classes).

- 4. Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL):** A Department of Defense exclusive, COOL eligible servicemembers receive \$4,500 (career cap) towards certification preparation, exams, and annual fees. Certifications are sometimes limited to those in your career field. I earned many of my certifications before COOL came out, but took three exams using COOL before retiring. The [BCSP MILITARY AND VETERANS](#) page is an excellent place to start for safety and health certifications.

Estimated savings: \$2,000 (study books and exams).

- 5. Deploy:** Many organizations offer benefits to deploying military. The Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) offers a leave of absence (more in the [RECERTIFICATION GUIDE](#)), and The Institutes, which offers multiple insurance industry designations, has a military program in which they provide discounted and free (for deployers) study material and exams for their credentials. [CONTACT THE INSTITUTES](#) for their current program discounts. While deployed, I chose to complete the Associate in Risk Management-Enterprise Risk Management (ARM-E) and the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU).

Estimated savings: \$6,200 (12 exams plus study materials).

- 6. Stop paying annual certification dues:** Per Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6055.01 Enclosure 3 para 4.d.(1), your service is authorized to pay annual certification fees (and pay for the certification preparation and exams). Each military service implements this authorization differently, so be sure to check local policy.

Estimated savings: \$1,200 (3 years and 10 annual fees).



\$50,000 (Total estimated savings)
and nearly two years of class time.

As you can see, I saved a great deal of both time and money by taking advantage of these offers while in the military. I encourage you to learn more about these military-exclusive programs and further your education!