

BEHIND THE BADGE SUBMISSION:  
**"The Modern State of Education"** by MSgt Matthew Gambill, April 2018

The Air Force gives you \$4,500 every year for college tuition and, if you are not using it, you might as well be throwing it away. When another fiscal year ends, in which you failed to take any college courses, that is yet another \$4,500 you will never see again; what a waste! Did you know that in 2011, congress introduced budget cuts that would reduce tuition assistance with the intent of placing the additional costs back on the Airmen? It was not approved but, it could happen again...like it or not, your free ticket for education may have an expiration date. It is pretty easy to find excuses not to enroll but are any of them really valid reasons?

For most, getting started is the toughest part. The two most important steps are knocking out your general courses for your CCAF and choosing (along with enrolling in) an undergraduate or four-year degree plan. In the following paragraphs I will provide you some guidance that can simplify the process and accelerate your journey to earning that degree. Please allow me to let you in on something that can have a tremendous impact on helping you complete both your general courses and any prerequisites needed for your Bachelor's degree. All you need to access this resource is an internet connection.

What if I told you there are online, self-paced, multimedia, college professor taught courses specifically aimed at teaching you what you need to know to pass all College Level Examination Program tests also known as CLEPs? That's right, a course for *all* 33 CLEPs offered, and they are 100% FREE! These courses include quizzes, slide presentations, online lectures and even textbooks; all free. Oh, and one more thing, after completing a course, this site will pay the fees for the CLEP, for anyone (federal funding is already provided for military to obtain free vouchers for CLEPs). I am talking about your wife, kids, parents, friends, neighbors, neighbor's dog...well maybe not the dog. Have I got your attention?

There is a new tool on the web for those pursuing their degree and, if you don't know about it, you had better get educated! This is by far the most powerful tool introduced to date, that can aid anyone looking to expedite their first year of college. It is called "Modern States". There is even an App for your smartphone; so you can study while waiting in line at the store. So, if you still need to complete those general courses for your CCAF, or are looking to get a head start on your undergrad degree, do yourself a favor and check out <https://modernstates.org/>, to be taught by professors from prestigious institutions such as: Berkeley, Purdue, Arizona State, NYU and MIT.



There are a few regularly confronted issues experienced by those seeking to further their education that I would like to address. Here are some answers to the most common roadblocks:

- Question: How do I sign up for a CLEP?
  - o Answer: Go to <https://clep.collegeboard.org>, register and sign up for a CLEP per the simple online instructions. Print out your receipt and take it to your local testing center.
- Question: Where do I find a testing center near me?
  - o Answer: Well if you are not located near a base, you can find a testing center on the <https://clep.collegeboard.org> website. There is a link for "Find a Test Center Near You," where you will see test centers located pretty much everywhere. If there is a

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college campus, university or a community college, chances are, they have a test center you can use. There are literally thousands and many will waive the testing fee for military!

- Question: I have already earned my CCAF and am now trying to pursue a four year degree but where do I start?
  - o Answer: This may take more than a couple of sentences so I will elaborate below...

In order to apply for tuition assistance through the military, you must have a validated degree plan loaded for you on the Air Force Virtual Education Center or AFVEC (link found on the AF Portal). That part is easy but finding the right college can be a bit tricky. Depending on whether your priorities are to earn a degree in the least amount of time possible, get additional education to help further abilities in your AFSC, or to obtain credentials to get your foot in the door at a specific type of institution post retirement, you will need to do a little research to find the college that is right for you. The good news is AFVEC makes that research simple. Just log in, scroll to the "Information" tab at the top and select "AU-ABC Programs," under the CCAF Programs section.

Once you are in, you will need to select your specific AFSC and submit. You will be given a listing of hundreds of degree plans offered by participating colleges in the Air University Associate to Baccalaureate Cooperative Program (AU-ABC). These are programs categorized to show you how you can maximize your already earned CCAF credits. All "Cat I" degree plans offer a path to earn a baccalaureate degree by completing no more than 60 additional semester hours on top of your CCAF. However, depending on the school and the type of degree you are looking for, you may find some colleges are able to cut that number down even more! You only need to ask, and those college admissions representatives will work with you.

Once you have found a few degree plans that interest you, contact the college's admission officers and arrange to email them your unofficial CCAF transcripts; this is simply the print out you can get right off the AFVEC portal. They will align your credits with their requirements and may even have some suggestions on other degree plans not identified on the AU-ABC listing. Many of these colleges have programs that can be completed exclusively online with no proctored exams required. Not to mention many offer expedited course work so you can complete your requirements in record time. Time...there's that word again. You may be asking yourself, "but do I really have the time?"

Here is one example I have come across. A recruiter can use their Human Resource Management (HRM) CCAF and apply it to Trident University International's AU-ABC for a Bachelor of Science in HRM, requiring 14 additional courses to complete. You can actually CLEP 4 of these courses; leaving yourself only 10 to go. You can easily knock out 5 courses per year (TUI offers 6 term years) and have your undergrad in less than 2 years! Additionally, 1 course per term is not as time consuming as you might think. According to the University of North Carolina, students should spend approximately 8 hours per week on one class. That is a little more than 1 hour per day. (*Paul 2014*) However, most high speed Airmen can achieve a passing grade dedicating half that amount of time. How many hours did you spend watching TV last week? I am betting it was at least 1 hour per day...priorities.

The bottom line is, many of us joined the Air Force with the idea of obtaining a degree eventually. Well if you don't start making time now, then when? Utilizing [Modernstates.org](http://Modernstates.org) and researching the education institution best for you can give you a jump start on that path to success. Quit making excuses and start making an effort!

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*REFERANCES: online, Modernstates.org/about-us/who-we-are/, 2018, Modern States Education Alliance; Paul, Kelly, 2014, <http://learnmore.uncg.edu/blog/bid/157407/How-Much-Time-Should-One-Commit-To-Online-Degree-Coursework>, obtained online 2018.*