

March 21, 2019

START HERE | GO ANYWHERE

Dear Chairman Regan, Chairwoman Williams, and Members of the Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee:

Lehigh Carbon Community College offers an array of services for veterans and their families, and one of our goals is to provide veteran students with the opportunity to receive credit for their prior learning experience. Through this opportunity, veterans avoid repeating courses in which they have already mastered the required competencies, allowing them to complete their education faster and at a lower cost.

This service is offered through LCCC's Prior Learning Assessment program, or PLA, which evaluates students' backgrounds and enables them to receive college-level credits for the life, work and educational experience they have already mastered outside the traditional college classroom.

Students can earn college credit for:

- Lifelong learning
- Military experience
- Work or volunteer experience
- Professional training
- Prior business or technical school education

Especially in the case of military professionals, students have an array of training and experience. At LCCC, up to 75 percent of a student's required credits may be transferred from their prior experience – only 25 percent of their credits must be awarded from LCCC. The college assesses previous military education and experience based on the recommendation of the American Council on Education.

In an effort to further help veterans move through their academic program without duplication, LCCC has adjusted its process regarding transcript evaluation to require all courses be evaluated and brought into the student's record regardless of major, which provides an opportunity to transfer more credits. Additionally, veterans can undergo College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) testing, which tests college-level material and awards college credits based on the results. These tests are offered at LCCC's campus in Schnecksville free of charge to veterans.

LCCC is proud of the services it offers its student veterans and their families, and is happy to help veterans earn their certificate or associate degree without duplicating any of their prior learning experiences.

Veteran profile  
Lehigh Carbon Community College  
Submitted March 21, 2019

U.S. Navy veteran Mike Hartranft, 51, began classes at Lehigh Carbon Community College after having been out of school more than 30 years. It was tough transition, as he navigated his way into classrooms with peers nearly half his age. But he started his college career already 15 credits along, taking advantage of his military career to apply credits toward his degree. He graduated in 2017 with a degree in electrical technology and works full time at Thermo Fisher Scientific, in Nazareth, Pa., where he is responsible for the smooth operation of a 500,000-square-foot warehouse and everything it contains.

Hartranft grew up in Allentown and graduated from Central Catholic High School. He now lives in Whitehall. Within a couple of weeks of graduating, he was headed to boot camp. He spent 10 years in the Navy as a radioman, released in 1995. The son of a career Navy man, Hartranft completed boot camp in San Diego, was stationed in Virginia Beach and Norfolk, Va., as well as on the U.S.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S.S. Wasp and U.S.S. Nashville. He also completed a tour of duty during the first Gulf War in 1990.

Before starting at LCCC, he struggled adapting to civilian life, working at US Cellular, UPS, Amazon and a small local company. Already adept in electronics, he was able to take that experience and turn it into college credits when he started at LCCC. That head start meant he didn't have to duplicate his work experience. As a single father at the time to a high school-aged son, working full time in the day to take classes at night, those credits also gave Hartranft the boost he needed to commit to the challenge.

“The boss who hired me at Thermo Fisher really mentored me on the type of program I should major in to be most successful in my job,” Hartranft recalls. “When I first interviewed for the position, he hired me on the spot. He was in the military at the time and really supported me as I started at LCCC.”

Hartranft worked with Career Link to find his career footing and took advantage of benefits through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for disabled veterans, which funded all of his educational expenses, including books, tuition and a computer. “I had no worries going to school,” Hartranft says. “I thought I was going to be the last person to be in a classroom. I didn't like school at all. But Diane (Stanus in the Records & Registration Office) was a sounding board.”

Hartranft has been with Thermo Fisher for four years and was recently promoted from maintenance technician to maintenance facilities supervisor.