# Transcript: IT Podcast - Ep 77 - MPS S1 Ep 5 - Getting Credit for our Military Experience with Dan Morrill Davon Copeland Elizabeth Lee and Jennifer Barney

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

WGU's IT Audio Series. Flexible, portable, profound.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Hey, what's up, everybody? This is our fifth edition. I'm actually really happy about this. Dan, this is crazy that this has taken a life of its own and expanded out.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

I like it. We have two amazing guest visitors today.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Yes, we do, some powerhouse women. Yes. Our first guest today is going to be Elizabeth Lee. Elizabeth, go ahead and tell crowd about yourself.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

I live in Sandy, Utah, which is a suburb of Salt Lake City, and I've been working at WGU for six years now. I started as a temp in processing, which is in-taking the mail and getting the transcripts. From there I moved to business evaluation, and after that I moved to teachers college articulation, and I moved from teachers college to military articulation, and I've been doing that for six or seven weeks now.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

I love it. You know what, nothing makes us more happy, or the people that are listening to hear someone say that, I'm working in the military space. Again, the whole purpose of us doing this podcast is so that our veterans, our active duty, and their family understand and know that WGU is not just military friendly, but we're military focused. The fact that our organization is ensuring that people are shifting into those positions to make sure that they are laser focused on making sure that we create access to attainment for all of our military population, that's outstanding. Thank you for who you are and what you do. Six years of experience within these spaces, which means that the power curve is about to go way high. Pressure busts pipes, but it also creates diamonds. Let's get it. Jennifer Barney, why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Yes, I'm Jennifer Barney. I am currently the supervisor for the transcript evaluation team. We are the ones that look at your previous transcripts and evaluate transfer credit for incoming students. I've been with WGU for eight years, and started out in the indexing team, moved to evaluations for the college of IT, and in there ever since. Thank you for having us here.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Welcome. Dan, take it away.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Jennifer and Elizabeth. I am fresh cryptologist out in a CTO. What do I need to bring to the table if I wanted to come to WGU? What are you looking for? What do I need to have? How should I prepare it for you?

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

As an incoming student, obviously, you want to be able to get credit for all of that experience and knowledge that you've attained to this point. You're going to want to submit any college transcripts that you have, from previous institutions, and then the military also submits either a smart or army-

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

KST.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Yes, thank you.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

I got you.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

You know all the an acronyms.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

I got them all. Joined service friends group.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

If you're air force associated with the Community College of the Air Force, we get those often as well. One thing that incoming students should probably be aware of is often times they'll take CLEP and DANTES credit as well. Those are associated with the ACE evaluated transcripts, but not with the Community College of the Air Force transcripts. So they don't need to send an additional test credit information if they have their ACE evaluated military transcripts. But they do need to send them in if they have Community College of the Air Force transcripts. That's something that we run into a lot. Community College of the Air Force has done a great job of giving us course descriptions, they're a little easier to evaluate. The ACE military transcripts up to this point have been a little bit more difficult because they just give you a very brief overview of what the job description was. We recently received a new tool called the ACE Military Guide. It has been invaluable in evaluating those credits. It gives us much more information, and we're really able to hone in better on what skills that these incoming students have. That's been a really exciting development for my team. It makes our job way easier. I'm sure it does yours as well, Elizabeth.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Yeah. Actually, since taking over this position, and this is a brand new position in our articulations department, so I'm reinventing the wall here. But we have this ACE Military Guide which gives us so much information. What I do is I go through and I look at your MLS, so your NEC or your AFSC. I look at the competencies that you are learning through your service and through all of those courses and on the job training. I pull it up in the military guide, and I match it up, and then I look at all of our transferable competencies, so not just courses, but competencies. I'm looking at a competency for competencies. If you have network experience, I'm going to plug that in. If you have security experience, I'm going to plug that in. Cryptography is a big one. I just did a cryptography transcript, a day or two ago, and it absolutely transferred quite a bit.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

That's awesome. I'm so happy that you guys are doing what you do. My question is based on everything that you just now say. In this space, there's a lot of moving parts, and like you said, ACE has just made updates and now you have ACE, which is the accreditation that we utilize for our competency-based learning that we learned in the military and how we articulate that over into college credit. My question is, what are some of the things that you're researching like right now to better serve our military population?

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Well, I for one have a lot of projects on my plate right now. We are working with contract and an agreement with the Community College of the Air Force. We have almost got that to go through. We're working on a landing page right now. That will allow airman with certain AFSC codes to just block transfer bunch of credit. That will be awesome. That will be going live hopefully soon. I can't give a definite time yet, but soon. We're also working on a partnership with the community college of the Navy. That is going to be coming around the pipeline student as well and I don't know how much I'm allowed to talk about that one, but there are some big innovations we are making with that one. Then like I said, I'm just going through and I'm getting my hands on all the JST transcripts, so I can find to create a database for our evaluators for Jennifer's team and all of the other colleges too that will make it easier for them to go through and they don't have to go through and look at all the competencies like I've been doing. The work's already been done, they can look at it, say, this occupation will transfer for this, this, and this.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

That's going to be extremely important.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

We love our articulations team. They save us a lot of effort and energy, and work, and it makes our job way easier. We're really grateful for that research.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Plus it gets everyone on the same page because I know in the past we had issues, because I'm coming from transfer evaluation as well, when you'd have two people who went through the exact same program together, got the exact same degrees at the same time, are applying for the same program, and there was always a little bit of human error when it came to evaluation. There was an instance once where I took something and someone didn't and there was a discrepancy there, so we're really trying to minimize that.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Dan and I did a podcast a couple weeks back when we were talking about the incentive-based learning that we do in the military, and what that means is is that, if you tell a sailor or a marine, or an air man, or a soldier, "Hey, this is what you got to do to get to that finish line. This is what you need, " they're going to put maximum effort going toward that goal so that they can attain it. What you're doing is phenomenal, because you're creating a roadmap for success for them. No matter what you do or where you are, at some point you're going to leave the military, so you need to be prepared. Dan.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

My next question, how do I bring you my transcript? What do I have to do to get my military transcript to you?

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Again, that depends on which branch of the military you're talking about. Education, registry transcripts, you can go through them. Community College of the Air Force, I believe that they do their own. You are in the intake, Elizabeth. You might have a more.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

It has been a while. The only thing I would add is if you are in the Air Force, you have a Community College of the Air Force transcript, so don't forget to send that in.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Correct. That's really more of intakes purview, so I don't know the details on that, but I'm sure that there are military helps out there that can help you submit those transcripts. Once we get them, it's just a matter of reviewing those and then, like Elizabeth said, having those articulations in place helps ensure that we can give the most credit. I'm so glad that we're getting some helps for the military students because oftentimes, we would get these transcripts. You know that they have more knowledge than the transcript reflex. It's very difficult, but we live in a black and white world in transcript evaluation. We can't infer that they have more knowledge, we have to document it. Having these helps really I think is a great thing for the military students because they do have a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge that they're coming with, and being able to have that shown more in black and white makes it really helpful, not just for the students, but for us as well.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Because at the end of the day, we don't want to handicap the students either by awarding them so much credit and then sending them into these high level courses that they're not prepared for.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

It's huge for two reasons. Jennifer, you touched on something that's extremely important. That's how do I take this military experience, this knowledge, these hard skills, these soft skills, and how do I spit that thing out so that the world can see it? Most of the time, like that joint transcript, doesn't fully depict all of those things, which is why the military person, the service member needs to actually go out and go to college or get a certification or do something to show that they have competency in those areas to show that they cannot not only complete a degree or show that they have knowledge in this specific type of training, but also that they have skills, because it's not enough just to have the experience if you can't put it on paper, like you said, black and white. There are three things that companies are concerned with, and that's the policy, procedure, and program, and all that stuff is written down. If you can't show that you have competency in those areas, then that's going to be a problem. I think that another thing that people don't look at is with the articulation piece. Why are you so hard on articulation? Well, the reason why we have to be hard on articulation is because accreditation and articulation are one and the same, and if we're not giving you access to rigorous education and we're not crossing our T's and dotting our I's, then it takes away from our program. WGU is accredited all across 50 states in various programs. At the end of the day, it is our responsibility to not only protect the student, but we also have to protect ourselves and our brand and everything that we've got going forward. Thank you for that. In this space, I want to know what's the biggest challenge that you've had in your role right now and how have you overcome it or what is the process of overcoming any of the challenges that you're facing in doing the military articulation?

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Well, for me, the biggest hurdle has been figuring out how to itemize and how to standardize the process for evaluating, especially these JST transcripts. When you look at the JST transcript, you have the MOS. I'm sorry if I'm using the wrong terminology here.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

You're doing great. Any C's.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Well, not on the same transcript, but you have the MOS, you have the specific course which I asked Sky and it was called the rate.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

The rate, yes. Rate.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Then ACE has also gone through this transcript and evaluated it and they say, "This course is going to transfer for network administration, principles of management, and electronics troubleshooting. " Before, previously, we would go solely off of the ACE recommendation. If it was principles of management, we take it for principles of management, but there was very few that we would take on a JST transcript. Now, I have the opportunity, through this ACE military tool, to go through, really look at the competencies, decide for ourselves. I'm looking at one right now that said two hours in business management, but I read through the description and I'm like, "Is this business management? Doesn't seem like it, does not match the competencies. " The biggest challenge for me was figuring out what am I evaluating exactly? Am I evaluating their entire service, the entire transcript? If they have a unit of communication here and a unit of communication here, can I transfer communication? Well, that's going to be up to the evaluator if we did it that way. We're really trying to standardize it more and look at just the rating and say, "It looks like ACE is going to take principles of management and network administration. We'll probably take those two, but I'm going to see if there's some critical thinking in there, I'm going to see if there's some communication in there and see what else we can give. "

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

You're digging deep. You're getting into it and trying to find every nook and cranny that you can find to make a listen people, this is the difference between a school being military friendly and military focused.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

It's a lot of you're learning how to communicate with your subordinates. Well, I'm going to give me some business communication for that because you're using the exact same skill there.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Oh, man, I wish I could come here.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

I know. Both of us did. I feel like we got robbed. Maryland’s a great school, but, man, I got to tell you.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Here's my question for you. Just from my own experience, you go to ACE school, you learn your basic skills being a cryptologist. Then you go and you get your airborne communication, so you become your aircrew, you get your airborne communication systems, and then decide they want to send you to your land-based communications, there's a main frame computer systems, then a small computer systems. Multiple SeaSchools. Additional education beyond that initial rating college. How do you handle those extra SeaSchools that can actually alter the trajectory of that student as they're going through their military career?

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

I'm not sure exactly what you mean by a SeaSchool. That's probably a different vernacular than we use.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

It's just an additional training. Say that I go to school to learn how to plug in headphones. Now my initial school is learning how to plug in headphones. Now I'm going to learn how to take the jack that the headphone goes in and install that into a computer. It's just additional training.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Got you. Do they evaluate those on those joint transcripts?

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Absolutely.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

That then would come through on that military transcript, and those are the things that Elizabeth's talking about that she's diving deep into to set up those guidelines and articulations. One of the things that is really exciting about what she's doing is that, oftentimes, military students might have similar paths. If you can establish one of those paths and set up those articulations and put that in, then it's very easy for us, once that's been established, to take that across the board and give that to all of the students that have taken that particular track. That's really helpful. It's really helpful in establishing uniformity across the board so that students who have had similar experiences are getting similar transfer credit and we can have confidence that they have those skills going in. The other thing that I think really needs to be addressed is the idea of our competency-based model is extremely beneficial to military students because, like I said, it's so very difficult to demonstrate competency on a transcript, but they have the opportunity to come in, and even if they didn't get that transfer credit, they can very quickly move through a course and show competency and move forward, which is a great benefit.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Absolutely.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

When we're charging only by the six-month semester, we're not charging per credit unit, we're not charging per course. As many courses as you can complete in that six months. That's all you're paying for.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

You're right, Jennifer. When you start talking about the competency-based model, there isn't a school in the military that isn't based on competency base. We go into the classroom. I call it LIP2 for WGU. I call it LIP2, which is learn it, prep it, test or turn in your paper, and on to the next. There's four steps. That's it. Once you show that you have the competency, you get the credit and you move on, and that's why it's so great. The WGU mantra is so great. But also, and I know this isn't a part of what we're talking about, but I always got to throw it in there, we got the mentorship. We got the mentor that we have. Well, we got 127,000 students right now that are actively right now taking classes. Within that, those students have a mentor that is dedicated to them. There's nothing more military than having a battle buddy, or your wingman or you wing person, however you want to call it, to help you get through it because it's not about how you start, it's about how you finish. I just wanted to throw that out there and just do a little shameless plug on the mentors. I did want to ask you guys questions. I know there's a lot of moving parts to your job and everything. What are the best resources that you use to help you get along the way or that you have to help discern these things and crack the code to the matrix? I took the blue pill.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

In transfer evaluation and I'm sure you use the similar tools, Elizabeth. We have a database called test through college source. It has course descriptions for all of the major and some of the minor universities and educational institutions in United States, and some foreign institutions as well. That is an invaluable piece because we can pull up a course and see a course description. We also through college source, have access to their course catalogs so that we can do a deeper dive if we need to, to find out about other things. Now, Community College of the Air Force does participate in that test college source database. We can really evaluate those pretty effectively. The other resource, like we said, is this new ACE military guide. It's huge in helping us to do the same thing with those joint services transcripts or smart transcripts. It's huge. We have not up to this point had the ability to really do a deep dive on those military transcripts. Having that option now, it's a game changer for our team. Elizabeth, do you have any additional resources you use?

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

I would just say the wealth of knowledge we have just sit WGU that I've been able to draw upon. I met with Davon and his whole team and they were able to really help you with that.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

My Military team is awesome.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

They were. They had a really awesome report. But I don't come from a military background. It's been invaluable to have people to speak with that, to ask questions and I got to go to Montgomery, Alabama to Maxwell Air Force Base to meet with the airman there to sign our MLU, our contract with the Community College of the Air Force. The process of meeting and speaking with people has been so great in this position.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Now that's a really super awesome thing. I'm plugging our mentors. One of the things I like about mentors is that we brought it up and other episodes. But one of the things as part of that mentoring process is also when you're going up in rank. You have someone help you move to the next rank. But you have to do things, take courses or pass leadership courses, all those other things are those part of that transcript as well, or do you and give credit for whatever rank that person has has taken?

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

We don't evaluate the rank. We go off of what ACE evaluates. I'm assuming that ACE takes that into consideration. Is there delineating what it would transfer in for? They had a lot more detail. Now with this ACE military guide, we have a little more, but they have a lot more detail on what that particular rank involves in the courses. We're basically looking at the transcript, seeing what ACE has evaluated and going from their evaluation.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

That really is that whole package then. Not just the courses you've taken about their rank you've gotten, and the support you've given other people along the way that shows up in this process.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

I've actually, as I've been doing, it's called skills mapping so not necessarily transferring course for course this mapping by skills. I have started going in and looking at the ranked and ACE military guide will really lay it out. It says third class, second class, first-class, and all the way up. It's been really nice to see how it builds on each other. What I've been doing is if it hasn't in the lowest class, and I find it in the lowest class, I'm going to apply it through all the ranks and then as they go up it gets a little more specific. But the sheets that I'm building out, we'll hopefully have those not sure how we're going to utilize them and build them into our system and our process. But I am looking at that.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Nice. Thank you. Sweet.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

I have one last question and I think that it's really important. I think when Dan and I sit down and we talked with our guests, we really want to dig into it. You guys have done a phenomenal job answering these questions. It's not easy to answer questions when you're not doing the work. You all just punched through it and there was a competence that goes along with your positions. Elizabeth, I know that you said that you've already been doing this for six weeks. But it is apparent that not only you have a level of subject matter expertise, but there is an investment and people don't care what you know unless they know that you care. I hope that all of our listeners out there know and understand that you and Jennifer care, and I believe it's one of our cultural beliefs to be student obsessed. Given that I buy from you all, hopefully, you get it from myself and Dan too. Just wanted to throw that out there. But my last question for you is, if you could step into my shoes right, they're 11.5.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

I don't think I'll fit. I can't fill those shoes.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

I got to a big head too, they has to be. I'm just kidding. It's big, fluffy hair. No, but if you could step into my shoes, what question would you have asked yourself that I didn’t. Go ahead, Jennifer, you first.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Well, I am a shameless WGU fan. My question would be when can I get started? Because to me, it's a no brainer. You have your competency-based model. You're going to get as much transfer credit as humanly possible. Our job, is to really do this balancing act of giving as much transfer credit as possible. Well, not inhibiting the student's ability to move forward and we were keeping the integrity of the program. That's our balancing act.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

That's rigorous education. Yet you want access to rigorous education. Yeah?

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

That's our balancing act. In fact, I have that in my team mission statement and we repeat it every week in our team meeting, that we need to give as much transfer credit as possible, while maintaining the integrity of the program. That's what we shoot for. To me, it's just a no brainer. It's reasonable cost, high-quality education, and you're going to get as much transfer credit as possible. I would say when can I get started?

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Right. Elizabeth?

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Mine was along the same lines of I think I would ask. If we're talking about this podcast, it's the only one someone might listen to and I am going to go back and listen to all your other ones as well. You've probably mentioned this, but I would ask what's the benefit of coming to WGU, over other online schools? I would say is just the amount of support. We offer a writing center and we offer a mass center. You have a weekly call with a mentor if you want to. You can reach out to your course instructor anytime you want. Then the biggest thing is that it's self-paced. I started my MBA two weeks ago. I'm about to finish the first class because you can just work as fast, as slow as you want. Of course, if you're going to go a little slower, you're going to pay a little more, but it is completely up to you. I think if you really put your mind into it, you can get through it. We lost power last night. We had a crazy storm here in Utah and we lost power. Now I didn't particularly have the will to pull up in my phone and look up the article that I needed to read. But if I wanted to, I could.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

The good part is I worked with Jennifer a whole lot. Jennifer, with that new system, does that mean you're still going to be asking questions of me, hey, can I accept this transfer credit in if this person has done. I do want to know if those questions are still going to apply or not.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Our Relationship isn’t going to change, is it?

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

I am always going to be asking you questions. That's always going to happen.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

I'll close on this one. Any last words, anything that you would want to say to the audience. Anything they should come in as an expectation when they're handing over the transcripts or their evaluations.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Just welcome aboard because it's a great place to be. It's a great place to be and I just echo all those things that Elizabeth just said.

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

Jennifer said, aka, hurry up to give me your transcripts.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Yes, exactly. Exactly. Why notyou, why not now. Let's just get this thing done, there’s that hill go get it. You know it.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Once the process gets going. Then the other is when you got up at WGU landing page, immediately there's going to be a pop up for a free application codes so don't worry about paying for it.

Speaker #3 (Dan Morrill):

Davon, any last words?

Speaker #2 (Davon Copeland):

No. That's it. Actually appreciate our guests like I said, we've got some power houses that are behind the scenes ensuring that everybody has access to opportunity and attainment. This is our mission and you know that we care, we love it. I just want to thank you all for coming by.

Speaker #5 (Jennifer Barney):

Thank you. Appreciate the opportunity.

Speaker #4 (Elizabeth Lee):

Thanks for having us.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

WGU, a new kind of you.