

Agency Helps Foster the Development of New, Younger Employees

By Ann Jensis-Dale and Sam Rouso
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The Defense Contract Management Agency’s process of recruiting a younger workforce — or reenergizing it, if you will — has begun. In October 2008, the first of as many as 900 new Keystone interns in the contracts, quality assurance and engineering fields entered the workforce.

Sites in Boston, Mass., and Carson, Calif., were selected and prepared for the influx of new DCMA employees, for a period of introductory and periodic follow-up training.

At the end of January, two classes of approximately 100 students completed the training at the two facilities called Distance Learning Centers. The staff at

the Boston DLC includes Noreen Cassaro, Tom Wall and Anita Sharninghouse. Claudia Hamler and Pat Roderick are members of the staff at the Carson DLC.

According to Juanita Wheeler, director of the human capital investment center, the internship program lasts a minimum of two years and a maximum of three. “Three years is the expectation,”



Keystone group, from left: John Foley, Kevin Wylie, Dexter Harper, Tim Keenan, Charlesetta Ward, Joey D’Amico, Joy Parish and Noreen Cassaro. (Photo by Ann Jensis-Dale, DCMA Public Affairs)

she said. “Two years will be the exception.” Each intern will be hired by and assigned to a specific contract management office Wheeler calls the plan “centralized management with decentralized execution.”

Once entered into the program, interns spend six weeks at the DLC for their initial processing and introductory training. The next stage of the program requires them to spend six months in their assigned CMOs, getting functional training, mentoring from their leaders and on-the-job training for hands-on development.

Periodically throughout the second year, they will return to the DLC for classroom training. The DLCs, while slated to be used extensively in this program, are not intended exclusively for it. “The two centers provide central training locations for the keystones and other DCMA employees. They will provide a consistent introduction to DCMA,” Wheeler stated.

Wheeler noted that the DLCs provide several benefits. “They launch the interns’ careers in a positive atmosphere, ensure coverage of basic skills and competencies, enhance the camaraderie of the groups and provide cost savings,” she said. The DLC staff provides oversight, training management and administrative support for the keystones while in the DLC.

The first six weeks of the program spent at the DLC are comprehensive. Along with processing and obtaining their



Keystone interns Yesinia Ibarra, left, and Mary H. Walker, right, flank Lorena Dubose, who represented their CMO, DCMA Northrop Grumman Manhattan Beach, at the graduation ceremony for the two new DCMA employees. (Photo by Sam Rousso, DCMA Public Affairs)



Patricia Kirk-McAlpine, DCMA Space and Missile Systems Division executive director, meets members of the inaugural class of Keystone interns at the Carson, Calif., Distance Learning Center. (Photo by Sam Rousso, DCMA Public Affairs)



Keystone interns learn the importance of teamwork toward accomplishing various tasks. (Photo by Ann Jensis-Dale, DCMA Public Affairs)

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common access cards, the interns receive an overview of the Department of Defense and DCMA, an introduction to leadership competency training and a series of mandatory DCMA courses — ethics, anti-terrorism, computer security, fraud awareness and safety. In addition, they receive an introduction to e-Tools, the Defense Travel System and other digital tools.

Interns also write up their initial individual development plans, and participate in other activities.

Part of the classroom training is conducted by the Defense Acquisition University, and some is computer based. The computer-based training allows the interns to proceed at an individual pace.

Reactions to the DLC experience have been positive, from both

the staff and interns. “It’s been a real pleasure to work with the interns,” Hamler said. “They are smart, willing and eager students embarking on new careers. They are the future of this agency, and the future is in good hands.”

Charlesetta Ward, an intern in the first cohort in Boston, also had a very good experience. “Attending the DLC was a valuable experience because it gave me a basic understanding of the organization and its goals, as well as what my job entails.” She continued, “Everything we were taught provided a strong foundation for us.” 



Carson's Keystone intern cohort 2 poses for a class photo. (Photo by Sam Rousso, DCMA Public Affairs)