

Two graduating students to join OTC full-time through SCEP.

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BY MARY MOSES
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Cheryl Seymour and Michele Dano, students in the Army Student Career Experience Program, will receive their bachelor's degrees and become full-time employees of the U.S. Army Operational Test Command this month.

SCEP is a program that allows college students to work as student trainees in a government organization while they complete their college degrees.

After they graduate the government organization has 120 days to decide if they'd like to absorb their SCEP students.

When Debbie Criminger, OTC G8 director, and Gail Sadler, G8 deputy director, learned about SCEP from a colleague, they decided to see for themselves if the program could be a benefit to their directorate.

"This is a program that has been around for a while," Criminger said. "We took another person's good idea and made it into a great success."

Criminger accepted Seymour, a local accounting student, into OTC's G8 as a SCEP budget student trainee in August 2008. She then picked up Dano, Seymour's classmate, for the same position the following year.

"She has, indeed, hit the ground running," Sadler said of Seymour. "The work she does is fantastic. For

the next year, we figured if one was good, two would be even better.

"It has been so good to get these young, enthusiastic and talented people in here," Sadler added. "They have fresh ideas and an eagerness to learn."

Seymour and Dano both graduate from Texas A&M University Central Texas Friday in the Killeen Civic and Conference Center. After graduation, G8 is working to place them in recently vacated budget positions.

"What is so great about this program is that when they graduate, if we have positions, they can be placed non-competitively," Sadler said.

According to Seymour, SCEP requires a good deal of commitment.

"The biggest thing is juggling work, school and home all at the same time," Seymour said. "Michele and I, we both have kids, and my husband is away in Albuquerque. But you do what you have to do in order to better your future for yourself and your kids."

One of the main projects that Seymour and Dano have worked on at OTC is the spreadsheet for the command's new financial plan, the baseline budget. Dano also works on the post-review for temporary duty requests.

According to Sadler, both students have achieved well academically. This year at Texas A&M University - Central Texas, she said

Seymour participated in a global competition that required student teams to run their own companies and craft strategies for achieving superior financial performance and market leadership. Seymour ran all the numbers pertaining to the company and chose which upgrades or downgrades would keep her company at the top, Sadler said.

"My team ended up being the best at my school and one of the top 100 teams worldwide," Seymour said. "I was pleased with the outcome."

Dano is thankful for the opportunity SCEP has given her to improve life for herself and her family.

"OTC's participation in the SCEP program has enabled me to achieve my educational goals while being allowed to work and learn," Dano said. "I couldn't work for a better group of people."

According to Criminger, SCEP has changed the way the U.S. government brings new, talented employees into civil service.

"SCEP shows how things have improved since I started in the civil service," said Criminger. "When I started, you had to begin as a GS-3 clerk typist at \$2.95 an hour. SCEP allows newcomers to move up much faster in civil service."

Criminger also said that SCEP gives students experience in government work while giving their supervisors a chance to see their work ethics and skill level. She believes

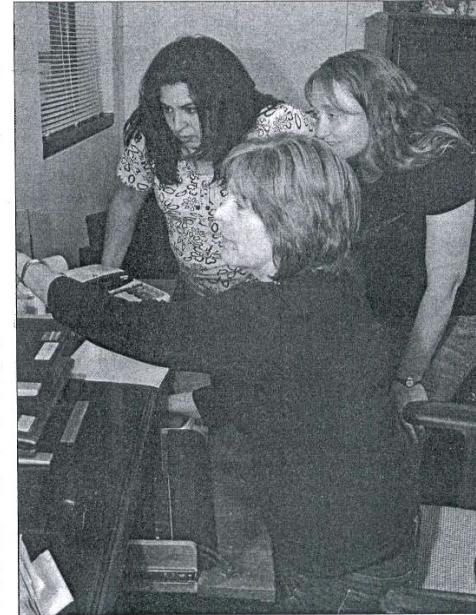


Photo by Mary Moses, OTC Public Affairs

(From left) Michele Dano and Cheryl Seymour, SCEP students at U.S. Army Operational Test Command, study a budgeting spreadsheet with their mentor, Gail Sadler, OTC G8 deputy director.

both G8 and the two students have mutually benefited from SCEP.

"SCEP has been a win-win situ-

ation for us," concluded Criminger.

"It lifts us up. They teach us just as much as we teach them."

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