September's account is provided by Kelly Moses, PMP, CSEP

As a result of career adjustments, I requested an extension from September 2015 until the end of the calendar year and it was granted.  This was a relief.  INCOSE understands that life happens and if you need an extension, they will work with you.  I also started studying approximately mid to late October and did not really ramp it up until early November.

My studying process started with the training slides found on the INCOSE website.  These slides provide an overview of the INCOSE Systems Engineering Handbook and have at least one question at the end of every chapter intended to represent a CSEP question you might see on the test.

I then took a test containing a small set of example questions.   I did HORRIBLE on this test.  This is what convinced me I should read the entire Systems Engineering Handbook.  It is not a fun read and you just have to slug through it.  I firmly believe you MUST read the handbook (or a SIGNIFICANT amount of it) to pass the CSEP test.

I only completed about 75% of the handbook before I got impatient and took another set of example test questions.  I did better, but it was evident I needed to study more.  I did not have answers to my example questions and had to grade it myself by finding all of the answers in the handbook.  This was very helpful for me.  It provided me a very good understanding of the layout and logic of the Handbook itself even though it was very time consuming.
I finally finished the entire handbook and took another example test.  By this time, it was late December and I had to schedule the test and take it even though I did not feel completely prepared.

The testing experience itself is important to understand.  You are not allowed to take in any study materials into the facility.  You are not even allowed to store test related materials in the lockers provided. I was asked to take it back to my car.

I did not have to wait and was called back almost immediately.  It is also important to note, about 1 in 6 questions are 'beta' or 'dummy' questions and you honestly will NOT know the answer.  It took me several questions before I calmed down about this.  Just roll with it!

It is always a scary thing to hit the button completing the test.  I did pass.  YEAH!  but there was stress involved, as with any professional test.  Comparing it to the PMP, I thought it was easier and more logical with less reliance on strict memorization to answer the questions.