

TraCen Cape May Education Update #260

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Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
BM3 Joseph Stoltz	TraCen (Seamanship)	DWINTR

Also, PA2 Christopher McLaughlin (at the Public Affairs Detachment, CGAS Atlantic City and working toward his bachelor's degree in psychology) has been selected for the dean's list at Rutgers University. And not to be outdone, Mr. Ed Melega (TraCen Security) has completed a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from Thomas Edison State College, with a magnificent GPA of 3.97!

Well done, everyone!

And if you've just finished a degree program or have any other noteworthy academic achievement to brag about, please let me know so I can recognize you for it.

Question of the Week

Q: In January I got a tuition assistance authorization for two courses, but had to drop one of them. A couple days ago, I received a computer-generated letter from the Navy threatening to garnish my pay if I don't pay back the TA for the course I dropped. What's going on? I didn't take the course?

A: When you're using tuition assistance (TA), you're dealing with two different computer systems and money streams: your school's and the Navy's (which is the Coast Guard's agent for TA). When you receive a TA authorization for two courses, the Navy's computer expects that you'll complete those two courses. That means it expects that when the courses have ended, you'll provide a grade report for both courses.

The Navy's computer isn't linked directly with every college's and university's computer. So when you drop a course the Navy's computer has no way of knowing you dropped it. That is, if you never tell the Navy's computer you're no longer taking one the two courses you received TA for, it doesn't know you're not still taking both of them and will act accordingly.

What that means is that 60 days after your courses end (whether you take them or not), the Navy's computer will expect to see a grade report for those two courses. If you provide one but not the other, the computer will automatically generate a letter telling you that you need to provide the grade report.

Thirty days after that, if you haven't provided the grade report, the computer is programmed to assume that because you didn't provide a grade report you failed the course. That being the case, it automatically generates another letter saying that you must repay the Coast Guard the amount of the TA used to pay for the course you failed. It also says that if you didn't fail, you must provide your grade report.

Thirty days after that, if you don't respond, you'll receive another computer-generated letter saying that the amount used to pay for the course you failed will be withdrawn from your pay.

Assuming the school didn't bill the Navy after you dropped the course, you can avoid the debit from your pay by asking the Coast Guard Institute (through your ESO) that to cancel the TA authorization for the course you dropped. If the school did bill the Navy, though, you'll need to repay the Navy and then seek reimbursement from your school.

The bottom line is that if you don't want to get tangled up in this mess, let the Institute know as soon as you drop a course that you'd like to cancel the TA authorization for that course.

ME Rating Information

Information about the new Maritime Enforcement Specialist rating is available on the Coast Guard Portal (<https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/myquicker/me/welcome>) including force notes, the billet map, and info on the process of lateraling from other rates.

Transferring New GI Bill Benefits from Non-CAC Computers

Unfortunately, there's currently a glitch in the process of transferring new GI Bill benefits to dependents – at least for our shipmates stationed at units which don't use a the common access card (CAC) to log in on Coast Guard computers.

The process must be completed via a DoD web site

(<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/TEB/consent?continueToUrl=%2FTEB%2F>). Once at this web site, the user is provided with three options for logging in: the CAC, DoD Self Service Logon, and DFAS PIN. Since the CAC log-in is unavailable, only the DoD Self Service Logon and DFAS PIN options are available. However, to obtain a DoD Self Service Logon user name and password, the computer has to be able to read one's CAC or one must have a DFAS PIN. That leaves only the DFAS PIN, but there's no way to obtain this DFAS PIN via this web site. And apparently this is the case whether they're trying to log in on a ship's or a shore-side CG work station.

The bottom line is that our personnel at units which haven't migrated to the main domain (especially floating units) can't yet transfer benefits to dependents.

Until this situation is remedied, if you're affected you should bring it to the attention of your command, via your chain of command or Gold or Silver Badge.

Physician Assistant Program Prerequisites

To qualify for the Physician Assistant (PA) program, you must complete (among other things) an Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) course. HS3 Tara Buckley (at ISC San Pedro) found a distance learning course that meets Coast Guard requirements. It's offered by Mayville State University in North Dakota and you can find info about it at http://www.mayvillestate.edu/worldwide_learning/anatomy_physiology.cfm. (Before you scoff at the fact it's in North Dakota, consider that it was the then-frontier states of the mid-west which first offered distance learning courses in the 1880s.)

LCDR James Cannon, who manages the Physician Assistant Program, notes that he continues to receive applications from those who “try to use an introductory course with an A&P I in an attempt to meet the six semester hour (SH) requirement. The A&P should be the 6 SH series with a part I & II. The same logic applies to the chemistry course requirement.”

Distance Learning Business Administration, Early Childhood, and Elementary Education Degrees

Periodically, the TraCen Cape May's Education Center receives flyers, brochures, posters, and other information from colleges and universities around the country which are hoping to tap into the military market. This information is available for browsing any time during working hours (including lunch time). ***The fact that this information is available does not constitute an endorsement of the corresponding schools or programs.***

Mayville State University in North Dakota offers five complete degrees via distance learning: a B.S. in Business Administration; a B.A.S. in Business Administration; both a B.A. and an A.A. in Early Childhood Development; and a B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education. For complete information, go to http://www.mayvillestate.edu/worldwide_learning/distance_degrees.cfm.

Employment for Veterans & Soon-to-Be Veterans

On Thursday, 27 August, Stockton College will be hosting a free conference to help veterans and military personnel who are retiring or otherwise separating learn about new careers being created in southern New Jersey in health care, energy, green technologies, aviation, and hospitality.

Participants can get job search support including tips on resume writing, interviews, using job search engines and social networking sites. And you can also learn about educational opportunities in the region.

This conference is a cooperative effort among Atlantic Cape Community College, Atlantic County Institute of Technology, Cape May Technical High School, and Stockton College.

For more information and to register (by 25 August), go to <http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=107&pageID=39> or call 609-652-4227.

New GI Bill Benefits Transfer Tip

(Courtesy of Rob McKee, full-time ESO at Sector San Juan)

When you're using the Transfer of Education Benefits web site (<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/TEB/consent?continueToUrl=%2FTEB%2F>) to transfer new GI Bill benefits to dependents, you may have a question as to what date to enter when asked for “End Date for Benefits”.

If you're transferring the benefit to children, use their 26th birthdate; for your spouse, enter the date that's 15 years from your expected retirement or separation date.

So, You Want to Get a License or Certification

When they retire or otherwise leave the Coast Guard, many of our shipmates want to continue working on the water. Some have a dream of having their own charter fishing or sightseeing boats. There's a way you can take both the 100-ton licensing exam preparation course and the exam itself at no cost to you.

You can use the Montgomery GI Bill to pay for many (if not most) OUPV (operator of uninspected passenger vessel) courses (<http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/training/oupv.pdf> and http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/search_programs.htm). And when it comes time to take the licensing exam, the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, and REAP will pay up to \$2,000 for each test

you take – no matter how many times it takes you to pass. AND the money to pay for these exams isn't charged against your 36-month entitlement.

This is true for other licensing and certification programs, as well: the Montgomery GI Bill will pay for the course and as many certification/licensing exams as you need to take (up to \$2,000 per test): law school and the bar exam, an MBA degree and CPA license, cosmetology school and the licensing exam, culinary school and certification exams, etc.

If you did not give up one of the other GI Bills (MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP) to get benefits under the new GI Bill, the new GI Bill will pay up to \$2,000 for only one exam and won't pay for the prep course unless it's offered by an institution of higher learning. An institution of higher learning is generally defined as an institution which awards degrees.

College Give-Aways

Periodically, the Education Center receives give-away items from colleges that are looking for your business. These include things like pens, mouse pads, notebooks, refrigerator magnets, sewing kits, and the like.

If you'd like to check out what's available and take any we have, please stop by the Education Center and look on the deck just inside the door to your right (under the light switch). You're welcome to anything there.

Excellent Overview of New GI Bill

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has produced an 8-minute video that provides an excellent overview of the new GI Bill. You can find it on YouTube and at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/feature/amervet/video/amvet2009-7-1.aspx>.

Some CG workstations may not yet have the most up-to-date software, which may make it impossible for you to view it on a CG computer. If that's the case and you want to see it, send the link to a non-CG e-mail address and you'll be able to view it on any non-CG computer you check your e-mail from.

NewGIBill.org

Trying to make the new GI Bill more understandable, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America has created a web site called NewGIBill.org (<http://www.newgibill.org/>). The site provides an overview of benefits and eligibility rules for the new GI Bill. But perhaps its best feature is a calculator (<http://www.newgibill.org/calculator>).

One tab helps you determine whether you're eligible and, if so, how many months of benefits you're entitled to. Another shows you the amount of financial aid you may receive under the new GI Bill, and a third shows you how many years you'll need to obligate to if you want to transfer your benefit to a dependent.

Service Obligation & Transferring New GI Bill Benefits

If you're now eligible for retirement or will be before 01 August 2013, check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp#obligation> for info on how many years (if any) you'll have to serve if you want to transfer your new GI Bill benefits to a dependent.

New GI Bill Benefits Transfer Procedures

As you know, servicemembers eligible for benefits under the new GI Bill may transfer them to a dependent after serving six years (in the case of a transfer to your spouse) or ten years (to transfer them to a child). This transfer may **only** be accomplished while you're still serving in the Coast Guard. Once you leave, by any means (discharge, retirement, medical retirement) you can no longer transfer your benefits.

For this reason, the DoD recommends that even if you have no plans to transfer benefits to your spouse or a child, you should transfer at least one month of your benefit to each eligible dependent before you leave the Coast Guard. You can modify or revoke your transfer decision at any time in the future, but only if you've made the transfer.

For more information on how to do this, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp#procedure>.

FY10 Tuition Assistance Requests

This year there will be no magic date for starting to submit FY10 TA applications. That is, as you figure out what course you want to take you can submit your application regardless of the course's starting date. HOWEVER, the Institute won't process requests until the beginning of September 2009.

What does this mean? It's pretty much the same as in previous years: you shouldn't expect to have a TA authorization in hand until after the new fiscal year begins. This isn't to say you *won't* have it, but you shouldn't be counting on it. That means you shouldn't register for courses expecting to have TA since you may or may not have it by your school's payment deadline.

Thinking of Teaching?

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Troops to Teachers also provides counseling and referral services to military personnel interested in beginning a second career in public education as a teacher. And the DANTES Troops to Teachers office will help you identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification, and employment opportunities. The main web site (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/index.asp) has all kinds of information about the program. Including a new on-line way to determine if you're eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers: http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp.

College for Those with Unpredictable Schedules

If you have an erratic schedule or an unpredictable personal life (e.g., if you have a baby) and think it will prevent you from taking college courses think again. Self-paced courses may be the answer you've hoped to find.

With self-paced courses there are no fixed deadlines for registering, completing lessons, taking tests, or even finishing a course. (Most courses run for nine months – with extensions of up to three months often available – or you can usually finish many in as little as six weeks.)

An added benefit of these programs is that in many cases tuition is lower than the maximum per-credit tuition covered by tuition assistance. (The lower the tuition, the more courses per year you can take per year.)

The following schools are just a few of many regionally-accredited colleges and universities which offer self-paced courses and, in some cases, whole degrees.

- Arizona, University of (<http://www.ceao.arizona.edu/corresp/index.html>)
- Colorado (Boulder), University of (<http://www.colorado.edu/cewww/>)
- Idaho, University of (<http://www.uidaho.edu/isi/index.htm>)
- Indiana University (<http://scs.indiana.edu/unhs/onlinecourses.html>)
- Iowa, University of (<http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/ccp/gis/>)
- Kansas, University of (<http://www.continuinged.ku.edu/is/index.shtml>)
- Louisiana State University (<http://www.is.lsu.edu/>)
- Mississippi State University (<http://www.is.msstate.edu/College/index.html>)
- Missouri, University of (<http://cdis.missouri.edu/>)
- Nebraska (Lincoln), University of (<http://independentstudy.unl.edu/military/index.shtml>)
- North Carolina, University of (<http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/catalog/index.htm>)
- North Dakota, University of (<http://www.conted.und.edu/correspondence/>)

- Northern Iowa, University of (<http://www.uni.edu/continuinged/gis>)
- Oklahoma, University of (<http://isd.ou.edu/>)
- Ohio University (<http://www.ohiou.edu/independent/>)
- Tennessee (Knoxville), University of (<http://anywhere.tennessee.edu/is/>)
- Weber State University (<http://departments.weber.edu/CE/dl/default.asp>)
- Wisconsin (Madison), University of (<http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/indlearn/>)

Scholarships for Servicemembers & Their Spouses

Every year, the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) offers scholarships to United States service members and their spouses who are working towards the completion of higher education degrees. Each award is in the amount of \$500 and may be used for tuition, fees, books and other expenses encountered by the student pursuing educational goals. The application deadline is 01 September.

For more information, go to <http://www.ccmeonline.org/nashville10.aspx?session=scholarships>.

More on Scholarships

Don't assume that because you've received the maximum from CGMA and CG Foundation grants or because you're not academically gifted or eligible for a scholarship aimed at military personnel that there are no other sources of funds for you. Every year, thousands of organizations throughout the country provide money to students to put toward their college expenses.

Unfortunately, most Guardians seem to think they can't qualify for them because they're only for people with exceptionally high grades or exceptional talent in one field or another. This is not the case, in many, if not most, cases. A huge number of scholarships are what might be called trait scholarships: scholarships given to people who share a trait with the group that's awarding the scholarship

Some of these traits are ethnicity, race, membership in a particular organization, and religion, and many other things. It's almost not exaggerating to say that if your mother is Polish and your father Italian and you were born on a Tuesday in Minnesota you can probably find a couple of scholarships you qualify for.

There are books and web sites which catalog thousands of scholarships. And because there are so many scholarships available, and because finding those you qualify for is tedious, there is a lot of money (as in many millions of dollars) that goes begging for takers every year.

All it takes to become a recipient of scholarship money is patience and organization. My web site lists a few scholarships specifically aimed at you (or military personnel in general) and your dependents, as well as some randomly selected scholarships anyone can apply for (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/scholarships.htm>).

You can search for scholarships on-line (using any of the many scholarship search engines available) or you can use books. The Education Center has a number of books you can look in to find scholarships that you qualify for. But the best resource I've found (and which I highly recommend) is Ben Kaplan's *How to Go to College Almost for Free*. This book doesn't have lists of scholarships you might apply for. Rather, it provides a roadmap for conducting your scholarship search and application process. With it you may be able to do what the author himself did: obtain almost \$90,000 in scholarship money that could be used at any school for any purpose.

A word of caution: Keep in mind, while searching for scholarships, that there are con artists out there waiting to take advantage of your need for college financial aid. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has a web site devoted to [Scholarship Scams](#) that you should check out.

Tuition Assistance & Grade Reports

If you're using tuition assistance (TA) to take college courses, remember that you **must** provide the grade report for your courses to the Coast Guard Institute within 60 days of the end of the course. If you don't, you'll receive a series of nastygrams from the Navy (which is the Coast Guard's agent for paying TA to schools) demanding reimbursement for the courses you used TA to pay for.

To avoid this, provide a copy of your grade report (with your full name and SSN on it) to your ESO. Your ESO will then submit it to the Institute via its TA tracking program. If you're unable to put your SSN on it (e.g., if you print it to a PDF file from your computer screen), provide it to your ESO.

If at all possible (so what the Institute sees is legible), print your on-line grade report to a PDF file. If you're not sure how to do this, here's the process.

- (1) Get the grade report on your computer screen.
- (2) Select "File" and "Print" (or press CTRL and P at the same time)
- (3) Select "Adobe PDF"
- (4) Click on "Preferences"
- (5) Click "Layout" tab
- (6) Select "Landscape"
- (7) Click "OK"
- (8) Click on "Print"
- (9) Click "Save" after deciding where you want to save the file
- (10) Attach the PDF document you just created to an e-mail and send it to me.

And if possible, please include in your e-mail the number of the TA authorization which corresponds to the grade report. The TA authorization number is in the upper right corner of your authorization (CGI_____).

Deploying?

If you know you're going to be deploying for some length of time – whether to the Persian Gulf or somewhere here at home – and want to use tuition assistance (TA) to pay for a college course, submit your TA request to your ESO as soon as possible.

The Coast Guard Institute will accept TA requests up to three months before a course begins. But your ESO may be willing to accept them at any time, and then submit them to the Institute as soon as that three-month window opens.

Don't wait until a few days before you're due to sail to submit your TA request. Even if it comes back quickly, if you don't have Internet connectivity you won't be able to download the TA authorization and may not be able to get it to your school by its deadline. The bottom line is: PLAN AHEAD!

Leaving the Coast Guard?

If you're leaving the Coast Guard within the next twelve months (whether through retirement, resignation, or expiration of your enlistment), you should be making plans for what you'll be doing after you take off your uniform for the last time. Check out the information on my web site related to career transition (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/careertrans.asp>).

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one later. If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while

maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector (<http://www.fedjobs.gov/>), governmental entities at all levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – provide similar benefits.

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

One more thing: the new campus's classrooms, labs, and library are all state-of-the-art. Even if you're not ready to register for classes right away, you should take the opportunity to visit the campus and look around. The Director of Academic and Student Services has extended a personal invitation to anyone who'd like to use the library to study, for research, or for pleasure reading. It's very quiet, well-lit, and has very comfortable furniture.

Quick Reference Study Guides

The TraCen Education Center also has a binder full of SparkCharts Quick Reference Guides on almost 40 subjects. You're welcome to use these in the Education Center or make copies to take with you. You can check out the subjects available at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/books.asp#spark>.

Education Library

In addition to SparkCharts, the Education Center also has a library of books on leadership, management, Coast Guard history, and other topics. Also in the library are the latest Professional Qualification Guides (PQGs) for each rating.

The Education Center also has dozens of brochures and books on college, financial aid, the officer program application process, and other things. If there are multiple copies, you're welcome to take one.

Get It in Writing!

A recent article on [military.com](http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html) by retired Coast Guard Chief Terry Howell (<http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html>) provides extremely good advice about how to avoid making costly mistakes when dealing with the VA about your education benefits.

The advice is equally applicable to dealing with *any* government or corporate bureaucracy, for that matter.