

TraCen Cape May Education Update #304

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Congratulations!!

The following personnel in the Cape May area passed Coast Guard Institute end-of-course, AQEs, and other tests since the last update:

Name	Work Site	Test
ME2 Fred Chase	TraCen (recruit trng)	E-PME-6
BMC Paul Ashley	Station Barnegat Light	E-PME-8

* First attempt

Also, HSC James Thomson just completed a Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences from TUI University, with a concentration in health care management with honors.

Well done, all of you!!

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.

Plan Ahead!!!

I'm going to be on TAD for the annual ESO symposium from 23 through 27 August, and on leave from 9 through 27 September. The Education Center will be closed during both periods.

Please plan ahead, especially with respect to tests and tuition assistance applications.

Question of the Week

Q: I read in *Navy Times* that starting at the beginning of FY11, the Navy is going to impose quarterly caps on how much will be disbursed in TA funds. Is the Coast Guard going to do this, too?

A: Each of the five services has and runs its own tuition assistance (TA) program. Each has separate funding, policies, and procedures which are put in place in response to the unique needs of each service. That is, the Coast Guard's TA program is independent from all others and follows rules devised by the Coast Guard. The conditions which prompted the Navy to revise its TA policy are not necessarily the same as those which affect the Coast Guard.

If Coast Guard TA policies change, those changes will be announced officially in an ALCOAST and your ESO will make sure you know about them. Nothing has been announced and until it has been, nothing has changed.

If you have a question you'd like answered as a Question of the Week, e-mail it to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

Web Page in the Spotlight

There's lots of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site that I've forgotten about and you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting college-related info for **Foreign Degrees** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/foreign.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused words. This week, the issue is the confusion of the words **here** and **hear**.

Although these two words sound alike (they're homophones), they mean completely different things.

Here is an adverb usually meaning in or at this place, point, particular, or case. "Turn here!", "It's already sunrise here", "Here we agree".

Hear is a verb meaning to perceive or apprehend via one's ear. "You don't need to yell, I hear what you're saying!", "I'm going to hear mass tomorrow morning at eight", "The committee will hear witnesses on the issue next week."

If there are any word usage, grammar, or similar issues you've encountered, please e-mail them to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

College Info Briefing at CGAS Atlantic City

On **Wednesday, 18 August, starting at 1430**, I'll be giving a short (20 minutes or so) presentation at CGAS Atlantic City on pursuing a college degree while in the Coast Guard. After the presentation, we'll have a Q&A for half-an-hour or as long as anyone has questions. And if anyone has questions specific to them, I'll be glad to meet with them one-on-one after the Q&A.

Topics we can discuss include:

- Determining if a degree is necessary
- Choosing a major
- Determining if distance learning is for you
- Choosing a college
- Assessments of college credit for military service
- Credit-by-exam programs
- Financial aid (including TA & GI Bill info)
- SOC agreements

Anyone in the area is welcome to attend (i.e., not just CGAS and SFO personnel).

Tuition Assistance Audits

You may have received a cryptic e-mail from this e-mail address (TACCTSR@institute.uscg.mil) saying “An audit was conducted on document number CGI 201013178 and passed. No action required.” If so, you can ignore it.

The purpose of the Institute’s tuition assistance audits is to catch any errors your ESO or the Institute’s staff may not have caught, to ensure no more money is being paid out than should be. It’s to ensure your request is correct (and that your TA requests pass these audits) that you’re required to provide your ESO with documentation showing how much your school is charging for tuition and course fees which you listed on your application.

If you forget to submit such documentation, processing your request will be held up until your ESO can verify the numbers on your application correspond with the tuition and fees listed on your school’s web site, in its course guide, in its catalog, or elsewhere.

Interested in Instructional Technology or Human Performance Technology?

Instructional technology, simply put, is the use of a variety of teaching tools to improve student performance. In the Coast Guard, instructional technology is increasingly used to provide what LT Adam Birst, in TraCen Cape May’s Instructional Support Branch, calls “mission ready performers”.

San Diego State University has created a new instructional technology certificate program aimed at individuals who don’t have a college degree. All five courses are provided completely on-line. The program is also very flexible: the credits you earn can be applied to either a bachelor’s or a master’s degree and you can take courses in Spring, Summer, or Fall terms. The cost is \$294/semester credit. Tuition assistance (TA) will pay \$250/credit.

You can find more information about the program at <http://edtec.sdsu.edu/it.htm> and by contacting LT Birst (adam.r.birst@uscg.mil).

Related to this, the University of West Florida also offers a four-course graduate certificate in human performance technology (<http://uwf.edu/ect/HPTcert.cfm>). You earn three credits per course at a cost of \$260.47/credit, for which students will receive all course materials and a PDA. “Participants ... can complete their courses anytime, anywhere as long as they can access an electrical outlet to recharge the battery. Participants who successfully complete three courses can keep their PDAs.” Like the San Diego State courses, you can roll these courses into a degree program.

Look Before You Leap

If you’re thinking about taking college courses and are about to apply for tuition assistance, make sure you’ve researched the school you’re about to enroll in. Most Guardians came into the Coast Guard intending to get a college degree. But duties, family, and other commitments often have a way of pushing those intentions to the bottom of the to-do list.

Then, one day, you’re reading *Navy Times* or watching TV and see an ad for a college that makes it seem so easy – especially since tuition assistance and the GI Bill make paying for college a non-issue. You log onto the school’s web site (or maybe call the number you saw on the screen or in the *Navy Times* ad) and before you know it, you’re enrolled. Let’s pause for a moment and rewind this scenario.

Before you provide any school any information (whether on-line or by phone), think about what you’re doing. If you were about to buy a car or a large-screen TV or a house, would you rush out and do so without at least comparing a few of them? Most likely the answer’s “no”. Yet next to buying a house, education is the most expensive purchase you’re probably ever going to make – and my experience tells me few compare schools before enrolling.

And even though the Coast Guard or your GI Bill benefits are probably going to pay for most of it, don’t you want to be sure the education you’re buying is worthwhile?

Earlier this month, a series of articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, described congressional investigations into deceptive practices by for-profit colleges. (<http://chronicle.com/article/Undercover-Probe-Finds-Wide/123744/> and

<http://chronicle.com/article/Lawmakers-Focus-Ire-on-Accr/123771/>) The videos taken of the undercover portion of the investigation are particularly troubling (<http://www.gao.gov/multimedia/video/>).

The bottom line is: don't even provide contact information until you've researched the institution you're focusing on. Schools more interested in your education than with their balance sheets will not

- pressure you to enroll,
- call you at all hours of the day and night to ask if you've made a decision,
- tell you you shouldn't worry about the cost (since TA or your GI Bill will cover it), or
- try to talk you into taking out loans.

Be a smart consumer before you become a student.

Learning a Second Language

There are a number of software applications that help you learn a foreign language. "Tell Me More" (http://us.tellemore.com/free_demo) and "Rosetta Stone" (<http://www.rosettastone.com/>), which everyone's seen on TV) are but two of these.

But don't go out and buy one just because everyone's talking about it. Before you order the software, do some research.

- Check the price. The only direct Coast Guard-related funding available to reimburse you language software you buy on your own is the Coast Guard Foundation Grant – which is only available to regular Coast Guard enlisted personnel (i.e., not Reservists and not officers).
- Ask around; see if you can find others who have it. Find out if it helped them learn what they need to know to talk about Coast Guard-related matters (e.g., law enforcement) in the target language. Unless you just want to learn another language for fun, if the software doesn't help you learn what you need to learn it's probably not worth buying.

If you really need to know a second language for work, the Coast Guard will probably pay for you to learn it. But a method other than software may be more effective. That is, if all you can do after months of using a computer program is make small talk that helps you locate a good restaurant, it's probably not worthwhile for Coast Guard purposes.

Check around to see if there are any intensive language training courses available in your area through a college/university, a commercial language school, or a government agency. For example, now that the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Protection agency work for the same cabinet secretary, you may find that you can get into a CBP language training program that either the Department or Coast Guard will pay for.

And, of course, you can always take college courses in the target language. Tuition assistance will pay for them and you'll also earn college credit from them.

You can also find loads of (mostly) free resources for learning foreign languages at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/languages.asp>.

FY11 Officer Program Application Deadlines

Five officer program selection boards will meet in FY11 to determine who will be offered positions in the various officer programs. Coast Guard Recruiting Command (CGRC) recently updated its web site with the deadlines by which applications for these programs must be submitted. You can find the list at (<http://www.gocoastguard.com/find-your-career/officer-opportunities/programs/program-forms-and-deadlines>).

Note that although there is a column labeled "ESO Deadline", you can disregard it if you are submitting your application through TraCen Cape May's ESO. As long as I have your application in time to get it to the recruiting office by the "RO Deadline", that's fine. For planning purposes, that means I need your application a week before the "RO Deadline".

You can find newly organized and expanded information about preparing for your interview at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/interview.asp#prep>. And for info on the application process, in general, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oapp.asp>.

November Servicewide Exams

Information about the November SWEs was just published in ALCGENL 124/10 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGENL124-10.pdf>). All those expecting to take a SWE in November should read the whole message, paying particular attention to paragraph 4.A.

Tuition Assistance for Courses Beginning in October

As you know, tuition assistance (TA) is only available for courses which begin in the same fiscal year that the course begins in. E.g., a course which begins on 15 September 2010 will be paid with FY10 funds. This is the reason why (in general) you can't submit a TA application on 15 September 2010 for a course which begins on 15 October 2010: the course begins in a FY that hasn't begun yet.

However, it often happens that Congress hasn't approved the funding for the Coast Guard before the beginning of a new fiscal year. When this happens, it can affect those who want to start courses which begin in early October, since TA can't be authorized using funds for the new fiscal year until Congress has appropriated them.

Last year or the year before that, the Coast Guard Institute got permission to use left-over funds from the previous fiscal year to pay TA for courses which start in the early part of the new fiscal year if Congress hasn't yet passed the appropriation bill. As a result, it has to prioritize TA requests according to course starting dates. So if this happens this year, any left-over funds will be used to pay for all courses which begin on 01 October before any can be spent on courses which begin on 02 October, and so on.

If you plan to begin a college course in early October, keep in mind that eTA's computer system automatically deletes applications that have not been acted on within 15 days of the submission date. This means you have two choices:

- submit your request for an October course via eTA on or after 01 October **OR**
- submit your application before 01 October using the old PDF application form (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4147.pdf>), which is otherwise only for units with poor Internet connectivity.

Either way, make sure you submit your application to your ESO – don't try to send the PDF application directly to the Coast Guard Institute.

Local Career Training & Certification Courses

Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) offers an extensive list of career training and certification courses and programs at its Cape May Court House and Mays Landing campuses. Many spouses of military personnel and servicemembers transitioning to the civilian work force will find these courses provide them with the skills necessary to start a new career in just a few short months.

There are professional development courses in subjects related to real estate, project management, non-profit fundraising, self-employment, notary preparation, and a number of others. (<http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/classes/professionalDev.htm>)

- Casino Career Institute (with scholarships and a tuition assistance program) - <http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/ci/index.htm>

- Health Professions Institute (preparing you for certification exams and/or entry-level positions in their selected field) - <http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/healthProfessions.htm>
- Green Education Institute (providing you with knowledge and skills useful in the growing area of green building design, construction, and retrofitting, how to conduct residential energy audits, residential wind energy, and many other subjects including the job market for those with knowledge and skills in these areas) - <http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/green/index.htm>
- Web site and digital design - <http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/classes/web-site-and-digital-design.htm>
- Early Childhood Professional Development Seminars - <http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/classes/early-childhood-development.htm>

These are just a few of the areas ACCC provides courses in – all very reasonably priced. Although you can't use tuition assistance to pay for these courses, GI Bill benefits may cover them (check with the Department of Veterans' Affairs at either 888-442-4551 or 800-427-1000).

Also, Cape May County Technical Schools Evening/Continuing Education Division holds many other courses (some free) on subjects as varied as:

- Arts
- Crafts
- Photography
- Dance
- Writing
- Computers
- Cooking
- Languages
- Health & fitness
- Office and business career-related
- State licensing in various subjects
- Home repair, construction, and furnishing

Stop by the Education Center to see hard-copy booklets on these courses or visit <http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/index.htm> (ACCC courses) or <http://www.capemaytech.com/2010fallbrochure.pdf> (Cape May County Technical School).

How to Go to College Almost for Free

Whether you'd like more money for your own education (even if you're using TA or receiving GI Bill benefits) or for a dependent, you should check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp#strategy>. You'll see that finding money for college *is* possible using a logical, linear (and not all that daunting) methodology devised by Ben Kaplan.

Also, the Education Center recently acquired Mr. Kaplan's video, "Finding College Cash in Tough Times" (<http://www.cityofcollegedreams.org/store/finding-college-cash-in-tough-times>). After a short introduction it covers the following topics:

- Part I: Exploding 3 Myths about Paying for College
- Part II: 3 Strategies for Maximizing Need-based Financial Aid
- Part III: 3 Steps for Finding Merit Scholarships
- Part IV: 3 Components of a Winning Scholarship Game Plan
- Part V: 3 Strategies for Making Your Application Shine
- Part VI: Concluding Thoughts & Final Quiz

Although I can't lend out the video, I can show it. Please contact me (andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil) if you're interested in seeing it. The total running time is 71 minutes. If there's enough interest to warrant it, we'll show it in the auditorium; otherwise, in the Education Center.

Free SAT & ACT Preparation Software

eKnowledge Corporation, MLB, the NFL, and other sponsors have teamed up to provide free SAT and ACT preparation software to servicemembers and their families. If you received the software last year, you'll need to get a free upgrade. While the software is free (retail price \$200), you must pay \$13.84, which covers the cost of technical and customer support, registration, licensure, processing, handling, and worldwide shipping.

Parents of high school students applying for college next year should get this software early, so their children can begin preparing ASAP.

To order, go to www.eknowledge.com/usa or call 951-256-4076. You will need to provide a "Sponsorship Code", which I'll be glad to send you if you send me an e-mail. Once you have it, please don't share this code with anyone in or out of the Coast Guard.

Interested in College, but Unsure How to Get Started?

If you're a total novice when it comes to college, check out these sites:

- <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/basics.asp>
- College 101 (on the Learning Portal, <https://learning.uscg.mil>). Once you've logged in, follow this path: Course Catalog > Education > College 101

If you're interested in getting a degree related to your Coast Guard rate, check out the Coast Guard Institute's web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/ve/roadmaps.asp>) for sample degree plans.

If you're unsure what to do next, check out the step-by-step plan for getting started taking college courses, at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

Tests at TraCen Cape May are administered by appointment according to the following schedule:

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs and AQEs*

Thursdays (0745): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

- * If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT or AQE on a Tuesday morning, you can take it on a Thursday morning.

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays available for other occasional tests, counseling, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, the doors to the Education Center are open on Mondays, as well.

If you call and I don't answer the phone, I'm usually administering a test (and, because of the noise, can't talk on the phone) or otherwise busy with someone in the office. E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me.

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.

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.

Microsoft Software Home Use Program

If you're on the Coast Guard's payroll (i.e., not a contractor), you're eligible to participate in Microsoft's Software Assurance Home Use Program. The program enables you to get a licensed copy of most Microsoft® Office desktop PC applications to install and use on your home computer. You're also eligible for discounts on other Microsoft software via the Employee Purchase Program.

For more information, go to <https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/my poc/?uri=wcm%3a5b18ff004d89b9a6ae7fbe259abd3cf4>.

Free College Reference Books

The following books are available in limited quantities in the Education Center:

- *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents (2008-2010)*
- *Guide to Online Learning*
- *College Majors That Work*

Also available, are the following:

- *Need a Lift?* (this is the American Legion's guide to educational opportunities, scholarships, grants, student loans, careers, and employment)
- *DANTES College Career Workbook*
- *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*
- *College.edu – Online resources for the cyber-savvy student*
- *Don't Miss Out – the ambitious student's guide to financial aid*

- *Best Career and Education Web sites: A Quick Guide to Online Job Search*

If any or all of these interest you, drop by and pick one up – first come, first served.

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 Center 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.