

TraCen Cape May Education Update #368

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Question of the Week – Why was my TA request denied?

Q: I submitted a tuition assistance request through the Navy's on-line application system, but I got an e-mail from the Navy that said, "Your request for tuition assistance has been denied with reason: Unspecified."

Education Office Comment: Please have an authorized ESO approve this application. Thank you."

What do I need to do to get TA?

A: The short answer is: You need to submit your application to an ESO.

I did some research and, apparently, you submitted your application to your leading petty officer. Only someone who's been appointed as an ESO and recognized as such by the Coast Guard Institute is eligible to review and approve eTA applications.

You'll need to re-do your eTA application, this time with your ESO's e-mail address in field #8, rather than your leading petty officer's.

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 a lot of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting **Career Development for Coast Guard Civilians** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cgcivcareerdev.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

A number of people have asked that I expand my weekly "Frequently-Confused/Misused Words" entry to cover grammar and usage questions other than confused/misused words as well. This week, **perpetrator** vs. **perpetuator** (These definitions are from Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.)

Perpetrator (a noun) describes someone who brings something about or carries out some activity, especially a crime. ("The police believe they've caught the perpetrator of nearly a dozen grisly murders")

Perpetuator (a noun) describes someone who or something which causes something to happen perpetually or to last indefinitely. ("The mechanism in the clock that kept it running was called the perpetuator" or "Mike could be called the perpetuator of Zoe's troubles since he wouldn't let the nasty rumor about her die")

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.

Are You Taking or Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you are, please take a few minutes to look over the help the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau improve the way colleges and universities communicate financial aid offers to students. Even if you don't plan to use loans, your experience will be useful in helping the Bureau figure out what kind of information students should have and how it should be presented.

With your and other students' input the Bureau is creating a "financial aid shopping sheet" (<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/static/students/disclosure.pdf>). Its purpose is to allow students looking for the best deal on education loans to compare offerings from different lenders and loan packages from different schools.

For more information, go to Know Before You Owe: Student Loans (<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/students/knowbeforeyouowe/about/>) and then provide your input at <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/students/knowbeforeyouowe/about/>.

Translate Your IT Experience into Opportunity

Cisco Certifications (a subsidiary of Cisco Systems) recently sent us some info on IT certifications you can earn. To quote from its web site,

Whether you are studying for a career in the IT networking industry, researching opportunities, or already in this field, Cisco Certifications can help you build a career in one of the hottest industries available today. Demand for professionals who can design, install, secure, and manage the networks that keep information and communication flowing is growing. In fact, according to projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of network and computer systems administrators is expected to increase by 23 percent through 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Cisco certified professionals are prepared to manage today's complex technology industry—whether it's working with core technologies, optimizing infrastructure, or keeping key applications secure and performing efficiently.

Certifications validate skills necessary for various job roles and also provide a competitive differentiator for employers, in and out of the military.

You can take a self-assessment to “discover what you may already know and what gaps exist in your knowledge. Then review the Study Guidance sections for each assessment for recommended study materials from across the Cisco Learning Network to enhance your knowledge.” For more information, go to <http://www.cisco.com/go/military>.

And to see if you have the skills needed for a career in IT networking, take the short test at http://cl1.psychtests.com/take_test.php?idRegTest=2814.

I hope to be able to offer Cisco and many other certification tests at TraCen Cape May sometime later this year. Although these tests aren't free, you can use your GI Bill education benefit to get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for them.

GRE & GMAT Fee Reimbursement

If you've taken a GRE or GMAT within the last 90 days, you may be eligible to get reimbursed for the test fee. To be eligible, you must:

- have a current Geneva Conventions Military and identification card,
- have never taken a DANTES-funded GRE General Test
- be applying to or enrolled in a graduate or business school requiring the GRE revised General Test or be fulfilling a legitimate Service requirement.

After you take the test, you must do all the following to get reimbursed:

- download and complete sections I, II, III, and IV of the applicable form,
- print out the form (after completing it) and sign it with a pen,
- submit the form, documentation showing that you took the test (a copy of your score report), and documentation that you paid for the test (a credit card statement, e-mail payment confirmation, etc.) to an ESO who's been designated as a DANTES Test Control Officer.

For GRE reimbursement, use this form: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/GRE-reimb.pdf>; for GMAT reimbursement, use <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/GMAT-reimb.pdf>. ***If I'm not your ESO, make sure to delete my name and the DANTES Test Center ID Number in the bottom right-hand corner of the form before printing it out.***

At the moment, TCOs must submit paper forms and documentation by mail (rather than digital forms by e-mail) to Prometric for processing, so you may not see the reimbursement for a number of weeks after your ESO sends off your request.

AFCT (ASVAB re-test) Preparation

If you really want to improve your ASVAB math or verbal scores, take a course through your local community college.

For example, Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) has review courses in math and English you can use tuition assistance to pay for. Rather than flounder around trying to study on your own, kill two birds with one stone: get a feel for what college courses are like and brush up on the subjects you need to improve to get to “A” school.

Another option is to use prep materials for the math and English parts of the GED. Much of what you'll be tested on in the AFCT (the in-service version of the ASVAB) is covered by the GED tests.

And you can find more resources (especially for math) linked to the TraCen Cape May web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/asvab.asp#preparing>.

ACT at TraCen Cape May

The ACT test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) will be administered on **Thursday, 22 March at 0730**.

If you're trying to qualify for a Coast Guard program that requires you to have taken the ACT and want to take it here, please let me know ASAP. There are three seats still available for the ACT. They will be reserved on a first come, first served. I usually administer these tests once a quarter.

- ACT, through DANTES, authorizes ESOs to administer these tests only for uniformed personnel.
- ESOs may administer the ACT at any time of the year.
- Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to take college courses.
- In general, military personnel are authorized to take one ACT (or SAT) paid for by DANTES. So if you want to take both, one would be free and you'd have to pay for the other. The ACT costs \$34; the SAT costs \$49.

You can read/download *Preparing for the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PreparingACT.pdf>) and *Taking the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/TakingACT.pdf>) for more information about the test.

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". E-mail me if you'd like it and I'll send it to you. However, once you get the code **PLEASE** don't share it with anyone – even other military personnel or dependents.

No More Paper & Pencil CLEP Tests

DANTES Test Control Officers (TCOs, who are ESOs with authorization from DANTES) can no longer order CLEP tests to administer locally. At the moment, you'll have to find a national test center (http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp) at which to take it.

Because the closest test site to TraCen Cape May for computer-based tests is Rowan University (in Glassboro, NJ – about an hour and a half's drive), I'm working to find alternatives for Coast Guard personnel in southern New Jersey. It's unlikely my efforts will bear fruit before the end of the year, however. For the time being, Prometric (another testing company) will continue to offer DSSTs in a paper format. Check out the offerings (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>) and see if some of them might fit into your degree plan.

MilitaryTimesEDGE and G.I. Jobs Magazines

Drop by the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113) to pick up the latest or a back issue of EDGE (published by the company that publishes *Navy Times*) and/or G.I. Jobs magazine. They're in the display rack to your right as you walk in.

Professional Development Courses from DoD Services

Many Guardians are unaware that they can take courses from the other services for professional development purposes. And, like Coast Guard courses, you can earn college credit by passing many of them. The firehouse personnel, for example, take a number of Air Force courses (and the corresponding end-of-course tests).

For many of you, this is a great way to get a slightly different perspective on the tasks you perform in your rating and add to your knowledge base. Doing this shows initiative, dedication to your rating, and can look good on your marks. There are also many courses unrelated to your specific jobs in the Coast Guard, but which give you a broader perspective.

For more info on what's available from the various services, here are their web sites:

Army: Army Correspondence Course Program (<http://www.atsc.army.mil/accp/aipdnew.asp>)

Navy: Navy Advancement Center (<https://www.courses.netc.navy.mil/>) and the Naval War College's College of Distance Education (<http://www.nwc.navy.mil/academics/colleges/cde/overview.aspx>)

Marine Corps: Marine Corps Institute (<https://www.mci.usmc.mil/>), Marine Corps University (<http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/>)

Air Force: Air University (<http://www.au.af.mil/au/afiadl/>)

Studying for the Servicewide Exam?

If you're studying for the servicewide exam (SWE), an end-of-course test (EOCT), or an E-PME AQE you may be tempted to use one of the iPhone or Android applications available which is advertised as covering what you need to know for the test. **BEWARE!!!** Those reviewed by one of our full-time ESOs are not complete. That is, they don't include all the material that's in the rating course or the E-PME Study Guide.

May Servicewide Exams

The next servicewide exams (SWEs) will be held on Tuesday, 01 May (for advancement to E-5 and E-7) and on Thursday, 03 May (for advancement to E-6, E-8, and E-9).

For those who've never taken a SWE before (or those who may have forgotten), if you've met all the qualifications (as laid out on your Personal Data Extract or PDE) by 01 February 2012, PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your PDE. **You do not have to (and cannot) request a SWE.**

When your PDE is made available on DirectAccess, make sure you check **everything** on it carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC. **You must do this before 01 April.**

- Are you going to be on leave or TAD on the date of your SWE?
- Will you be in-transit due to a PCS move on the date of your SWE?
- Are you going to be away from the unit listed on your PDE for any other reason on the date of your SWE?

If so, do the following:

- find a unit you know you'll be geographically near on your SWE date,
- contact the ESO at that unit and ask if it's OK to take your SWE there,
- assuming the ESO says "yes", ask for the unit's OPFAC,
- let your SPO know what the name and OPFAC of that unit so PSC knows to change your PDE.

PSC will automatically send your exam to the unit list as your exam board on your PDE.

Substitute exams are not authorized except in emergencies over which you have no control. Regular leave (even if you scheduled a Caribbean cruise six months ago) is not an emergency. A wedding – even your own – is not an

emergency. For more information on just which circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 3.B.3. of the *Enlisted Accessions, Evaluations, and Advancements Manual*.

If you revise the PDE info concerning your exam site and later find out you won't be able to take your exam there after all or at the scheduled date and time, let your ESO know ASAP.

For more servicewide exam information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/swe.asp>.

Check Out a Career in the Health Information Technology Field

Estimates from government agencies and independent studies indicate a need for 50,000 to 80,000 more health IT workers so health care facilities can implement and maintain electronic health records (EHRs) and meet meaningful use requirements.

Included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 were grants to community colleges to be used to train "health information technology professionals": people qualified to support information exchange among health care providers and public health authorities and to redesign of workflows within the health care settings to gain the quality and efficiency benefits of EHRs.

If you're interested in finding out more about opportunities these grants create, information on colleges providing this training, their admission criteria, their tuition structures, etc. check out the fact sheet at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/HIT.pdf> and one of the participating consortium's web sites at <http://hitregiond.pittcc.edu/index.html>.

Careers in High Energy

If you're looking for a recession-proof career, you might consider companies that generate and distribute energy. Nearly 40% of current workers in utility companies are expected to retire or leave within the next five years. Openings include security officer positions, which you might be hired for without specialized training (depending on your current rate), engineers, line workers, plant operators, pipe fitters, welders, and others.

The Center for Energy Workforce Development is a non-profit consortium of electrical, natural gas, and nuclear utilities and their associations formed to help utilities develop solutions to the coming workforce shortage in the utility industry. Check out its Troops to Energy Jobs initiative at <http://www.cewd.org/index.asp>, the bottom of the page, and <http://engineers.getintoenergy.com/index.php>.

And once you've read a bit about the types of work that's likely to become available, check out the Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>) to find out more about

- the nature of the work,
- required training,
- other qualifications,
- advancement opportunities,
- current and future employment prospects,
- earnings,
- related occupations,
- sources of additional information.

Is an Emergency Management Career for You?

Read the article by Jessica Lawson from MilitaryTimesEDGE magazine (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/career017.pdf>).

NavRules & Deck Watch Officer Tests

When studying for a Deck Watch Officer test (either the closed-book DWINTO or open-book DWINTR), be aware that the official book, *Navigation Rules: International – Inland* (COMDTINST M16672.2D) is correct only through 25 March 1999. The tests cover what's in the book *and* all changes made to it since 1999.

You can find the current corrections by going to the Coast Guard Navigation Center's web site (<http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/>) and following this path: Nav Rules > COMDTINST M16672.2D - Navigation Rules.

Links to both a complete corrected version and the individual changed pages are in the paragraph below the list of bullets at the top of the page.

New Enlisted Rating Advancement Training System (ERATS)

ALCOAST 033/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST033-11.pdf>) followed by 577/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST577-11.pdf>) described the new system which will replace the training system currently used by enlisted personnel to advance (EPQs, PQQs, and EOCTs). A presentation recently produced by ForceCom (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ERATS_Intro.pdf) provides a really good introduction to how the new system is structured and will work.

The new system is currently in effect for MSTs and the message implementing it for members of the OS rate was just published (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST046-12.pdf>).

Top Colleges for Veterans

Military Times Edge (published by the same company that publishes *Navy Times*) recently created a list of colleges and universities which takes into account criteria 500 student-veterans felt were the most important to them. You can find the list at <http://militarytimesedge.com/projects/best-for-veterans/best-colleges-for-veterans/2011/>.

TEACH Grant Program

The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program provides grants of up to \$4,000 per year to students who agree to teach for four years at an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families and to meet other requirements. The terms and conditions of this teaching service obligation are explained in the TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve that you must sign before you receive a TEACH Grant.

For more information, go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/TEACHGrant.pdf>.

Summer Career Academy

The National Energy Center of Excellence at Bismarck State College (North Dakota) is offering the first annual Summer Career Academy to youth ages 14-16 on 19 to 21 June 2012. The academy will provide participants with an exciting

opportunity to engage in energy-related lab experiments, tour energy facilities, and learn from faculty teaching at a world-class center known for training the industry's workforce.

The cost of attending? Nothing. Participants will attend free of charge thanks to support from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Montana Dakota Utilities, Otter Tail Power Cooperative, and Bismarck State College. Students will stay in the college's dorms and food will be provided.

Space is limited to 20 students. Interested students need to **apply by 01 March 2012**. Applications are at <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/nece/academy/>. Students who are selected will be notified by 23 March 2012. For more information on the academy, contact Joan Trygg at 701-224-2445 or at Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu.

Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you're interested in taking college courses, but are unsure where to start or what to do first, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>. The seven steps provided there will help you

- understand terminology and how you progress toward a degree,
- figure out what you want a degree for,
- determine what you want to major in,
- find colleges/universities which offer degrees in your desired major,
- request degree plans from your chosen school(s),
- submit a request for a education assessment and to have official transcripts of your assessment sent to colleges you've identified, and
- pick your first course.

This is the hardest part of the process. Once you've done this, it's just a matter of deciding which type of funding to use (tuition assistance, GI Bill, scholarships, loans, or a combination of these) and applying for it. Tuition assistance (TA) and GI Bill funding is easy to use and readily available. You've got to plan ahead if you want to get scholarships because applications are usually due at specific times of the year that might not coincide with dates your courses begin. And loans, while they're readily available, should be your last recourse.

CGES Scholarships

The Coast Guard Exchange System is accepting application for three scholarships (\$1,500, \$750, and \$500) based on academic achievements, accomplishments, interests, and participation and leadership in school-oriented and volunteer activities. **The deadline for applications is 28 February 2012.**

You can find complete details at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGPSC145-11.pdf>.

Sea Service Women Scholarship

(courtesy of SueAnn Walter, full-time ESO at the Coast Guard Academy)

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,500 scholarship for a relative (male or female) of a sea service woman. The application deadline is **09 March 2012**.

"Eligibility is open to any female or male relative of a sea service woman who has served or is currently serving in the Navy, Coast Guard, or Marine Corps or their Reserve components." Applicants may be related to the sea service woman by birth, legal adoption, or marriage.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/WAVES-scholarship.pdf>

CG Foundation Scholarships

The Coast Guard Foundation recently announced its scholarship programs for 2012 (see ALCOAST 584/11, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcoast584-11.pdf>). Check out the ALCOAST for details on these eight scholarships. **The application deadline is 15 March 2012.**

Career & Education Planning Tools

Many people in the Coast Guard – military and civilians alike – are unsure of what career fields best match their personal interests and abilities. While you might be extremely competent at what you're doing in the Coast Guard, you might have skills you'd rather put to use in some other field. ESOs throughout the Coast Guard (including TraCen Cape May's) have access to many different tools you can use to assess your interests and possible ways to earn a living while pursuing those interests.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/discover.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sitestest.asp>.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (0730): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs*

Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

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

* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT, RAT, 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 Mondays and 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 Wednesdays, 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 at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

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>).

Also, stop by the Education Center to check out the (small) supply of booklets related to rejoining the civilian work force. Here are the topics of the booklets:

- Jobs With a Future
- How to Develop Job Resources
- The Resume
- The Cover Letter: A Resume Should Never Stand Alone
- The Mature Resume: The Resume with Experience

- The Follow-up Letter
- The Interview
- How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment
- Civilian Again
- Leaving the Service ... and Beginning Your Next Career
- Military to Civilian: Your Resume and Job Hunt
- Effective Goal Setting: How to Reach the Goals You Set for Yourself

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 (or a transcript) 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>).

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. There are a number of web sites at which you can find information useful to military personnel transitioning to civilian life and veterans.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has a veterans' employment web site called "Feds Hire Vets" (<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>). Its purpose is to implement the federal government's strategy for recruiting and employing military veterans. It's intended to be the preeminent source for federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. And the main federal government jobs web site is at <http://www.fedjobs.gov/>.

And (courtesy of Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle) the state of Maryland also has a similar site called the Military to Federal Jobs Crosswalk (Mil2FedJobs, <http://www.mil2fedjobs.com/>) to help you "translate military occupations to federal jobs".

Finally, don't overlook government jobs entities at other levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – which provide benefits similar to those available through the federal government.

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.

Education Center Library

The TraCen Education Center 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>.

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) and Enlisted Performance Qualifications (EPQs) 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.