

TraCen Cape May Education Update #385

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ESO on Leave; Education Center Closed

TraCen Cape May's ESO will be on leave and the Education Center will be closed **from Monday, 23 July through Monday, 30 July** (open again on Tuesday, 31 July). Please make your testing plans and submit your TA requests accordingly.

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
SN Jamal McCloud*	TraCen Admin	E-PME-4
FN Jennifer van Vliet*	TraCen Recruit Training	E-PME-4

* First attempt

Also, BMCM James Bordell – formerly the OIC of ANT Cape May, now CMC at Sector Delaware Bay – just completed a bachelor of science degree in Homeland Security/Emergency Management from Thomas Edison State College.

Well done, SN McCloud, FN van Vliet, and Master Chief Bordell!!!

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 – After transferring my GI Bill benefits to my daughter, what else do I need to do?

Q: Back in 2010, I transferred my Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to my daughter. She's ready to start school this fall, but the VA rep at the school says she's got to have a "Certificate of Eligibility" before the GI Bill will pay for her tuition etc. What did we do wrong? What else do we need to do?

A: When you filled out the on-line form to transfer your benefits to your daughter, what you were doing is requesting the Coast Guard's permission to do so and asking the DoD to transfer ownership of the benefits from you to your daughter. But half of the process involved you, the Coast Guard, and the DoD. As you can see, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) wasn't involved in that process.

To actually use the benefits, whomever owns them (in this case, your daughter) has to submit an application to use those benefits to the DVA. The form to fill out is the VA 22-1990 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/doc/VA22-1990.pdf>) if you're using them yourself or the VA 22-1990E (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/doc/VA22-1990E.pdf>) if a dependent is using them. Or the applicant can fill out the on-line version of the appropriate form (<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>). Until an application has been submitted to the DVA it has no idea your daughter owns the benefits and wants to use them.

Once the DVA receives the form, it could take a couple months before it's been processed. Be patient. The DVA will send your daughter a "Certificate of Eligibility" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/doc/CertEligibility.pdf>). She'll take that to whomever handles GI Bill matters at her school, and the school will take it from there. The GI Bill representative should be able to give her an idea when payments will start.

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 three pages: **ASVAB/AFCT** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/asvab.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, **allude** and **elude**. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

Although these two words are pronounced almost the same, they have very different meanings. *Allude* means to make indirect reference to something. ("In the interest of discretion, Mary alluded to John's recent difficulties with the law" and "During their interrogation of the suspect, the detectives alluded to the possibility she might receive special consideration if she talked.")

Elude means to avoid adroitly (“The mice eluded the trap” or “The escapees managed to elude capture”). It also means to escape perception, understanding, or grasp of (“Subtlety totally eludes him” and “Victory continued to elude the Army of the Potomac”).

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.

30 June Deadline: Special Student Loan Consolidation

The Department of Education is currently offering a short-term consolidation opportunity, but it ends on 30 June 2012.

For more information, go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/specialconsolidation.jsp>.

01 July Deadline: Reserve Servicewide Exam

Reservists have until 01 July to complete all advancement requirements if they want to take the October servicewide exam. Requirements include completing all EPQs/RPQs, passing an EOCT or RAT, required competencies (if any) and, for those seeking advancement to E-6 or E-8, an E-PME Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE).

Remember: to take an EOCT you have to have completed your EPQs, and to take an AQE you have to have completed the relevant E-PME Performance Requirements.

01 August Deadline: Regular E-5 & E-6 Servicewide Exam

E-4s and E-5s in the regular Coast Guard have until 01 August to complete all advancement requirements if they want to take the November servicewide exam. Requirements include completing all EPQs/RPQs, passing an EOCT or RAT, required competencies (if any) and, for those seeking advancement to E-6 or E-8, an E-PME Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE).

Remember: to take an EOCT you have to have completed your EPQs, and to take an AQE you have to have completed the relevant E-PME Performance Requirements.

OS3s and OS2s, please make sure you understand **all** aspects of this process and get **everything** done ASAP. Some of them may require you to go to Sector Delaware Bay or the Sector Field Office in Mays Landing.

Reserve Your Seat Now for the ACT at TraCen Cape May

If you’d like to take the **ACT Assessment** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>), I’ll be administering it on **Wednesday, 11 July starting at 0730**.

Seats will be reserved for you on a first come, first served basis so let me know ASAP if you want to take one of these tests.

DANTES Test Control Officers (ESOs who’ve been specifically designated) may administer these tests only for uniformed personnel. In general, military personnel are authorized to take one ACT **or** one SAT paid for by DANTES. So if you want to take both, one would be free and you’d likely have to pay for the other. The ACT costs \$34; the SAT costs \$49.

TCOs may administer the ACT at any time of the year, and can administer the SAT during all months except July, August, and September. You can see a comparison of the SAT and ACT at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>.

Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to take college courses.

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. As for actual preparation materials, check out <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp#prep>.

New YN1 EOCT

ALCOAST 287/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST287-12.pdf>) announced that to be eligible for the May and October 2013 SWEs, YN2s must have passed the latest YN1 EOCT before 01 February 2013. This is true even if you passed the previous YN1 EOCT.

New MK2 Course

ALCOAST 305/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST305-12.pdf>) announced that a new MK2 course (0232/6) is now available. You can order a hard copy from the Coast Guard Institute (via your ESO) or download it from the CGPortal (<https://elearning.uscg.mil>), where you'll also find the current MK EPQs. You must complete the latest EPQs before you can take the MK2 EOCT.

The previous version of the course (0232/5) will become obsolete and the tests for that course will not be scored after 01AUG2012. Until then, passing either 0232/5 or 0232/6 EOCT will qualify you for the November 2012 SWE.

Enlisted Reserve Scholarship

The Coast Guard Foundation is now accepting applications for 2012-2013 academic year Enlisted Reserve Scholarships. The program is open to Reservists and dependents registered in DEERS. The application deadline is 18 July 2012.

For complete information, see ALCOAST 301/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST301-12.pdf>).

Expanded Testing Schedule at TraCen Cape May

Tests at TraCen Cape May are administered by appointment according to the following schedule. (** New days* denotes new test days)

** Mondays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs*

Tuesdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

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

** Fridays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs*

College placement, AFCT, and all other tests will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis.

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 I'm 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.

Latest Issue of G.I. Jobs Magazine

Drop by the Education Center to pick up the latest issue of G.I. Jobs magazine. In it are sections on

- personal finances,
- the transition from a military to a civilian career,
- stories about how military personnel have landed on their feet in new civilian careers,
- a feature story profiling a specific career field,
- a short profile of a private sector career field,
- items on applying for federal government jobs,
- items about entrepreneurship,
- education-related items, and
- items on how to get hired.

And, as is to be expected, there are lots of ads – but these are mostly ads to let readers know about job opportunities.

SOCCOAST Degrees & Majors

An underused benefit available to all Coast Guard personnel, and dependents of military personnel, is SOCCOAST. What is SOCCOAST? Well, the name is an acronym for an association of colleges and universities called Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, Coast Guard (pronounced sock-coast). Essentially, the schools in a given SOCCOAST degree network agree to abide by a number of principles which guarantee that the courses you need to complete a degree at school X will be the same courses you need to complete the same degree if you have to transfer to school Y. Those principles also allow you to take courses from any SOCCOAST school in your degree network and apply the credits earned to your degree no matter which school in the network you end up getting your degree from. This can mean you have more courses available to choose from when deciding which course to take to fulfill a requirement for your degree.

How does this work? After completing six semester credits, you can (and should) get a "student agreement" from the school you plan to get your degree from (called your "home college"). The student agreement is a degree plan, laying

out exactly which courses you need to complete to get your degree. It serves as a contract between you and your home college, locking in the courses needed to complete your degree.

Even if the school changes its degree requirements, you only have to take the courses listed on the student agreement, which remains in effect even after you leave the military.

For more information about what SOCCOAST is and how to take advantage of it, go to <http://www.soc.aascu.org/soccoast/ForStudentsFAQCG.html>. And for a spreadsheet showing all current SOCCOAST degrees and majors (along with degree network they're in), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/SOCCOASTdegrees.xlsx>. You can sort the data on the spreadsheet any way that's useful to you.

Marketing Yourself for a Second Career

Between 0900 and 1130 on Wednesday, 08 August 2012, a lecture/Q&A session on making the transition from the Coast Guard to the civilian work force will be held in the Constantine classroom of the MCPOCG building. If you plan to leave the Coast Guard in the next five years, you and your spouse are strongly encouraged to attend. Topics covered will include:

- Competition in the job hunt
- Civilian employers' perceptions about military personnel
- Planning your job search
- Résumés, cover letters, broadcast letters, etc.
- How employers read your résumé
- Networking & the hidden job market
- Preparing for and conducting a successful interview
- Salary negotiations and benefits

To sign up, contact Mr. Gary Adams at ronald.g.adams@uscg.mil or 202-372-4089.

Aviation Ratings ERATS Implementation Update

According to ALCOAST 262/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST262-12.pdf>), transition of the aviation ratings from the current enlisted professional development system to ERATS (Enlisted Rating Advancement Training System) is ahead of schedule.

Originally, these ratings weren't scheduled to fall under ERATS until May 2013. But as of 02 August 2012 AET, AMT and AST Enlisted Performance Qualifications (EPQs), Performance Qualification Guides (PQGs), and end-of-course tests will be replaced by Rating Performance Qualifications (RPQs) and Rating Advancement Tests (RATs).

For complete information on what ERATS is and how it works, ALCOAST 577/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST577-11.pdf>).

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 whether you need a degree to enter the field you want to work in,
- if a degree will be helpful, 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 to the Coast Guard Institute for an 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.

What Happens After I Submit a TA Request?

Many first-time users of tuition assistance (TA) don't know what to do after they've submitted a request for TA. First, after receiving notification that your request has been approved, download it and review it carefully to make sure there are no errors.

If there aren't you provide the authorization to your school (the cashier, bursar, or whomever the official is who takes your money) after putting your SSN on it and signing it.

After you finish the course, you have to provide a grade report to your ESO for every course listed on the authorization. Do this as soon as your grade report becomes available.

For more detailed information about what to expect after submitting your TA request and about your responsibilities while taking a TA-funded course and afterward, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/ta-b.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 from Region D at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/HIT.pdf>. (The info on this fact sheet applies to all five regions.) And to find a community college in the region nearest you that's offering courses as part of the health IT program, go to http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt/community/healthit_hhs_gov_community_college_program/1804.

Alternatives to Fixed-Term College Courses

Have you thought about taking CLEP tests as a way to earn college credit, but then rejected the idea because studying on your own doesn't work for you? Or have you thought about taking college courses, but rejected that idea because they take too much time or because you're concerned ops may get in the way of completing a course? If so, check out self-paced college courses (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>).

They have the benefit of being quicker to complete than semester- or quarter-based college courses (most schools allow you to complete them in as few as six weeks) while they're structured so you learn the material in digestible chunks rather than being left completely on your own.

These courses have the added benefit of not being tied to a traditional term: you can start at any time. They also give you a huge amount of flexibility: you can take almost as long as you want to complete the course (up to 12 months in most cases) and there are no set dates for lessons or tests. And some schools offer whole degree programs this way.

Check out some of the many reputable schools which offer self-paced (or independent study) courses at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>.

Learning Another Language & Foreign Language Testing

There are a number of software applications that help you learn a foreign language. "Tell Me More" (http://us.tellmemore.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, including <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/LanguageLearning.pdf>.

- **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 and Reserve enlistees on active duty (i.e., not drilling Reservists or 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.
- **Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP).** If you want to earn FLPP as one of your unit's designated interpreters, it's highly unlikely a commercially-available language course will give you the proficiency needed to get the necessary rating on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>).

And keep in mind that even if it does, your unit has to have designated interpreter billets *and* you have to be formally assigned to one of those billets. (Most operational units have only two or three interpreter billets.)

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 and/or practicing foreign languages at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/languages.asp>.

How Much Would You Need to Earn Outside the Military to Equal Your Military Income?

Even in the current economy, a lot of people are thinking of leaving the Coast Guard for a civilian career. If you're one of them, check out the military-to-civilian pay calculator on the G.I. Jobs web site (<http://calculator.gijobs.com/paycalculator.aspx>). What you learn may surprise you.

Occupational Certification & Apprenticeship Programs

A number of occupational certification programs are available through your ESO. The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP - <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>) is a program that allows regular Coast Guard members to earn apprenticeship certification in any of 125 skills learned through work experience and related technical instruction. All you have to do is document the experience you gain while performing your regular military duties; no after-hours work is required.

You can also get a credential (certification or license) in dozens of different occupational fields (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cert.asp>) through a large number of nationally-recognized certification organizations. Here's a small sampling of the fields in which you can get certified:

- automotive service professional
- dental assistant
- contract manager
- medical technologist
- personal trainer
- human resources specialist
- computer networking professional
- project management
- facilities management.

And if you're eligible for GI Bill benefits, you can likely get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for the cost of each certification or licensing exam.

Scholarships

Below are descriptions of a number of scholarships open to military personnel, their dependents, or both. **Be aware, however, that these are just a few of thousands of scholarships you or your dependents may be eligible for.** They're the low-hanging fruit, the ones most often publicized and (as a result) the ones that have the most applicants. If you really want some serious money from scholarships, you'll apply to all you're eligible for – especially those not widely known. For more about scholarships (including how to find and apply for them in a systematic manner), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>.

Waldorf College

(courtesy of Mr. Marc Fagenbaum, full-time ESO at Base Miami)

To recognize the sacrifices made by the family members of military servicemembers and public safety personnel (firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs & dispatchers) Waldorf College in Iowa will award eight scholarships for on-line students and two for residential students in 2012 through the Hero Behind the Hero Scholarship Program.

Two scholarships (one for the military spouse or dependent and one for the firefighters/law enforcement officer spouse or dependent) will be presented on the award dates listed. Applicants not selected may continue to apply for a maximum of five scholarship award dates.

Scholarship Application Periods

01 JUN 2012 – 31 JUL 2012
01 AUG 2012 – 30 SEP 2012
01 OCT 2012 – 30 NOV 2012

Scholarship Award Dates

August 2012 (on-line)
October 2012 (on-line)
December 2012 (on-line)

Go to <http://www.waldorf.edu/Online/Tuition---Financing/Scholarships/Hero-Behind-the-Hero> for more information and a link to an on-line application. Or you can e-mail hero@waldorf.edu or call 877-267-2157.

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/sitest.asp>.

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.