

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #267

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## Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
SN Timothy Jeffries	CGC Dependable	E-PME-4*

\* passed on first try

Well done, SN Jeffries!

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:** How come if I've received an e-mail saying my ESO has approved my TA request it takes so long to get the authorization?

**A:** Unfortunately, the wording used on the Navy's eTA web site is a bit misleading. Most ESOs who are using eTA don't actually approve your TA application, despite the use of the word "approved" on the e-mail you receive. Instead, most merely review the information you enter on the on-line TA application form and, if it's all correct, forward it to the Coast Guard Institute for actual approval and final processing. A few ESOs perform both the review and the approval function and generate TA authorizations locally, but most do not.

Once the Institute has approved your application, one of the TA staff generates an authorization and e-mails it to you and your ESO. This process can take up to two weeks, although if you're using eTA it's usually less than two days.

## Coast Guard Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Institute has advised ESOs that all funds have been exhausted for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grants and Vander Putten Education Grants programs.

The Institute will continue to accept applications until 1 December 2009. If you have not received a check by 31 December 2009, you may resubmit a new application to cover unpaid expenses beginning 1 January 2010. Please remember that you must submit your grant request less than a year after the date on your receipt.

## Health Care Certification Exams

Certification exams for more than a dozen clinical and administrative health care career fields are now available through DANTES test sites, including TraCen Cape May. For more information, <http://www.nhanow.com/>.

## Rating Courses & E-PME Study Guides Give-Away

Two rating courses (BM3 and MK3) and two copies of the E-PME-4 Study Guide are available to whomever wants them. Drop by the TraCen Education Center in the Command & Mission Support (aka Admin) building, room 113 if you'd like to take one. They're just inside the door.

## Vocational Courses & Financial Aid

As you know, the Coast Guard's tuition assistance (TA) program only funds courses which meet two general criteria: (1) offered by nationally- or regionally-accredited institutions and (2) result in credit you can transfer to another nationally- or regionally-accredited institution. Generally, this means TA can't be used for vocational courses and programs.

However, if you're a member of the regular Coast Guard, didn't turn down the Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty) in boot camp, and had \$1,200 deducted from your pay (or if you're a Reservist) you can use your MGIB benefits for practically any vocational course or program. (To find out for sure if the course you want to take is eligible for GI Bill reimbursement, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-o.asp#saa>.)

And if you decided the new GI Bill was for you and gave up either the MGIB-AD or MGIB-SR to get it, you can use it for the same courses you could have used MGIB benefits for. If you didn't give up MGIB benefits before electing the new GI Bill, you won't be able to use it for anything but courses offered at institutions of higher learning (IHLs). Generally, IHLs are accredited degree-granting institutions, which seldom offer vocational courses.

## Powerful New (and Free) Study Aid

If you're not sure you're quite ready for college (part-time or full-time) or if you're trying to improve your ASVAB scores to qualify for an "A" school, you now have a great new tool at your disposal.

Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) diagnoses your "current level of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and math abilities and teaches the concepts and skills needed to increase proficiency in each of these academic areas." Through OASC you have access – via any computer at any time of day – to dozens of lessons and quizzes.

- Pre-tests help you evaluate strengths and weaknesses in each subject area and design customized lessons.
- There are interactive games, lessons, and flashcards as well as practice sets and quizzes.
- There's a post-test to measure end-of-course performance.
- It's self-paced.
- There are different course lengths to fit any schedule and accommodate any time constraints you're under.

In the verbal section are lessons ranging from "Building Your Vocabulary" to "Understanding Difficult Text" to "Understanding the Author's Tone". In the math section are lessons such as "Eliminating Wrong Answers", "Multiplying

and Dividing Fractions”, and “Percent Increase and Decrease”. In addition, there are lessons on “Dealing with Studying Stress”, “Wrapping up Your Studying”, “Reviewing Math”, and “Reviewing Verbal”.

And OASC is available to both Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian) and dependents of servicemembers. Check it out at <http://www.petersons.com/dantes/>.

## New Civilian Transition & Education Web Site

The publisher of *G.I. Jobs* magazine has created a web site (<http://www.gijobs.com/default.aspx>) that provides loads of information helpful during your transition to the civilian job market and before. There, you'll find sections on résumés, job and recruiter interviews, wardrobe, education, job fairs, and franchise opportunities.

I do want to offer one word of caution, though. When reading the info on this site (and many other sites, including military.com), keep in mind that the companies and educational institutions described, discussed, or listed on the site will likely have paid the site's publisher to get onto it. **Don't assume** that because a college or university isn't on the site it isn't military friendly. It may be more “military friendly” than others on the site, but just didn't want to pay or have the money to pay to get onto the site.

## E-PME & Rating Sign-Offs & Tests

There are two separate and parallel path enlisted Coast Guard personnel must complete before they can be advanced. One is the occupational specialty or rating path, the other is the professional military education (PME) path. For a description and graphic depiction of the two paths go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cgmilcareerdev.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/EASchart.pdf>.

**The rating path** involves demonstrating knowledge and skills learned on the job via Enlisted Professional Qualifications (EPQs, formerly practical factors, which are available for each rating on the Coast Guard Learning Portal, <http://learning.uscg.mil>) and through non-resident training courses (which you order through your ESO). Mastery of EPQs must be demonstrated to a Professional Development Coach appointed by your CO/OIC, who is at least one pay grade senior to and of the same rating as you. (See Personnel Manual, Art. 5.C.7.a.3.) All EPQs must be signed off for the next higher pay grade before you can take the end-of-course test (EOCT) for that pay grade. (See ALCOAST 297/08.)

**The PME path** involves demonstrating knowledge and abilities learned on the job and from the relevant E-PME Study Guide (separate ones for advancement to E-4, E-6, and E-8). Performance Requirements must be demonstrated to a designated supervisor appointed by your CO/OIC (see E-PME Manual, para. 3.D.2.). All Performance Requirements for E-4 must be signed off before you can take the E-PME-4 Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE). All Performance Requirements for the E-5 and E-6 must be signed off before you can take the E-PME-6 AQE. All Performance Requirements for the E-7 and E-8 must be signed off before you can take the E-PME-8 AQE. (See ALCOAST 179/05.) To take the servicewide exams for or otherwise advance to the odd pay grades (E-5, E-7, and E-9) you must first demonstrate mastery of E-PME Performance Requirements.

You do **NOT** have to have your E-PME Performance Requirements signed off before you can take a rating EOCT. You do **NOT** have to have your EPQs signed off before you can take an E-PME AQE.

## Foreign or Puerto Rican Degrees

Did you earn a degree in a country other than the U.S.? Do you want to transfer credits earned in another country to a U.S. school? Do you want to pursue graduate school at a U.S. school based on an undergrad degree earned outside the U.S.? (Unfortunately, if you earned a degree in Puerto Rico, it's considered a foreign country by most U.S. schools.)

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, check out the info at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/foreign.asp>.

## Grade Reports & eTA

If you're using tuition assistance (TA) to pay for college courses, you know you do so on the condition that you provide grade reports for those courses when they end. If you're using the on-line TA application process (eTA), be aware that you must provide your grade report **within 42 days** of the date your authorization says the course ends. If you don't or can't provide your grade report during that period, you'll be locked out of eTA.

Should this happen to you through no fault of your own (e.g., the school is late in providing grade reports), you can submit an old-fashioned PDF TA request with your digital signature on it and request a waiver of the grade report requirement. Be aware that TA applications submitted this way will take longer to process and you may not receive your authorization for up to two weeks.

## New College Info

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.***

The most recent offering I've received from regionally-accredited schools (tuition well under the max allowed by tuition assistance) is from ***Louisiana State University***.

LSU is one of a number of universities in the U.S. that offers self-paced courses. All of these courses allow you to start at any time – there are no fixed deadlines for registering, completing lessons, taking tests, or even finishing a course. You can register at any time of the year, work at your own pace, and take up to nine months to complete a course.

Needless to say, courses from these programs are especially advantageous if your schedule is unpredictable.

For more information, stop by the Education Center to look through the latest Independent & Distance Learning bulletin, go to <http://www.outreach.lsu.edu/idl>, or call 800-234-5046

## Testing in TraCen Admin Building

Education customers in the Cape May area who have visited the TraCen Education Center know it's conveniently located in the Command & Mission Support (aka Admin) building. Of course, this convenience comes at a price: noise. Conversations – even quiet conversations – in the inside hall or the outside walkway are easily heard inside the Education Center. And this noise makes it difficult for those taking tests to concentrate and do their best.

To reduce the noise in the area, we've recently acquired some signs to notify visitors when testing is in progress in hopes they'll stop talking. We have four of those yellow A-frame signs (placed at both ends of the inside hall and the outside walkway) as well as a red-and-green electronic sign above the Education Center door. Both say "QUIET! TESTING IN PROGRESS".

As a sign of respect for your shipmates and their desire to take tests in a quiet environment, please stop talking when you see the yellow signs and the lit red-and-green sign.

## New ME "A" School Applications

Applications for the new ME "A" School are now being accepted. For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/psc/epm/ao/nonrate.asp> and <https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/myquickr/me/welcome>.

## **Military Times Edge**

The current issue of *Edge*, from the publisher of *Navy Times* is available in the Education Center for anyone who wants a copy. The articles in the current issue are:

- Why some online degrees are better than others
- Find the perfect job: researching, networking, and building your personal brand
- College pitfalls
- Ace the interview with responses to 5 likely job interview questions
- Balancing act: TV host doubles as Reservist
- My great new life: Army vet finds happiness as a personal trainer
- From the Corps to the diamond: former Marine on making it to the majors
- 3-year bachelor's degrees
- Film company solicits scripts
- Business cards
- And more ...

## **Mark Your Calendar for CollegeWeek Live**

If you're the parent of a college-bound student or are otherwise interested in getting good information about college, check out CollegeWeekLive (CWL). CWL is a four-day on-line college fair to help prospective students in their college planning by connecting them with colleges in a live, interactive environment. You'll be able to find information from dozens of colleges and universities on things like admissions, financing, admission test preparation, college visits, and finding the college which best fits your son, daughter, or yourself.

And while it's aimed mainly at students, parents and counselors are also welcome. And you can register for free (as well as check out the speakers, their topics, the schedule, and many other things) at <http://www.collegeweeklive.com/>.

The next CWL will be held from Wednesday, 04 November through Saturday, 07 November and it's a really fantastic tool. You can do everything you can do at a physical college fair except physically pick up brochures and shake people's hands. You can ask questions of speakers and school representatives, you can download information, you can even chat with current students at various colleges.

## **Other CollegeWeek Live Events**

In addition to its virtual college fairs, CollegeWeek live hosts many other types of events ([http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en\\_CA/guest/app-about](http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en_CA/guest/app-about)). For example, it's hosting a Test Prep event on Thursday, 17 September between nNoon and 2200 (eastern time) where you can "attend" any of 20 practice SAT, ACT or TOEFL test sessions. These are no-cost events you can access from your computer.

"Test prep tutors from organizations like ProTesters and Powerscore will be leading the live video sessions with real time Q&A, so make sure to be there. Test experts Gary Gruber, Ira Wolfe, and Lynn O'Shaughnessy and representatives from ACT and CollegeBoard will be there to answer your questions."

And if you're considering early admissions, CollegeWeekLive gives you the ability to research a wide variety of colleges, and text chat live with admissions officials. This makes college admissions easier by eliminating money, time, and travel issues from the college search.

At CollegeWeekLive, you can:

- video chat with students on campuses across the country,
- chat live with admissions reps from hundreds of colleges,
- get admissions questions, answered by the pros in real-time,
- win scholarships and other special promotions just for attending, and
- access hours of on-demand content on crucial admissions topics.

## Free SAT- ACT Prep Software for Military Families

The eKnowledge Sponsorship Alliance (ESA) – which includes the DoD and a group of NFL and MLB players – is offering SAT and ACT test prep programs to all military service members and their extended families. You're eligible if you're a servicemember from any branch of the military (regular, Reserve, National Guard), retired, a veteran, or a DoD employees or civilian performing military support and their relatives and dependents.

For more information, go to <http://www.military.com/grad-center/prepare-for-success/free-sat--act-prep-software-for-military-families>.

## Provide Your Input on New College Curriculum

Valley Forge Military College (<http://www.vfmac.edu/index.cfm>) "is developing an online degree program **exclusively** for military personnel, including all active duty, National Guard, Reservists, and veterans of any branch of the Armed Forces." Among the college's distinguished alumni are General Norman Schwarzkopf, Senator Warren Rudman, and the current Chief of Naval Operations (equivalent of our Commandant) Admiral Gary Roughead.

"[T]o build an online program that will meet specific needs across the military community, [the college] is launching a military education survey and will use the data gathered in developing ... degree program options, tuition and academic policy."

If you're interested in getting a degree from an institution that's trying to meet your specific needs, help Valley Forge's meet those needs by participating in its free survey at <http://www.vfmconline.com/>. It should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete. "[Valley Forge wants] to build a program designed **by** those who serve, **for** those who serve."

## ASVAB Do-Overs

If you're trying to qualify for an "A" school or some other Coast Guard program, you may want to improve one or more of your ASVAB scores. Here are some things you should be aware of.

- Coast Guard policy allows you to take any of the individual tests which make up the Armed Forces Classification Test battery (AFCT), which is the in-service version ASVAB. This means you can take as few or as many tests you want during a test session.
- You can take an AFCT 30 days after you took it at MEPS. From then on, you must wait at least six months between testing on the same test. This means that if you took the AFCT "Arithmetic Reasoning" (AR) test after graduating from boot camp, and wanted to take it again, you'd have to wait six months between the two tests. If you took the AR test after graduating from boot camp and wanted to take the Mathematics Knowledge (MK) test, you could take it at any time – you wouldn't have to wait until six months after you took the AR test.
- Each of the DoD services has its own policies for administering AFCTs, but all of them require examinees to take the whole battery – all the tests – at one sitting.
- At the moment, the DoD services are using different versions of the AFCT than the Coast Guard's using. And, in any case, they use different tables from the Coast Guard's to convert your raw scores to scaled scores on the AFCTs. Because of this, if you take the AFCT battery at a DoD facility, whatever scores you receive may be different from the scores you would have received if you'd taken them through the Coast Guard. And, of course, this means that, as a result, you may not qualify for a given Coast Guard program.
- Because the DoD services and Coast Guard use different conversion tables, Coast Guard personnel are **prohibited** from taking AFCTs at DoD facilities.

- Coast Guard ISCs and Training Centers stock AFCT booklets, answer sheets, instruction booklets, scoring templates, etc. They alone score answer sheets and enter converted scores into DirectAccess. They may, however, lend test booklets and provide answer sheets and instruction booklets to other commands for short periods.

So, contact your ESO – not a DoD facility – if you want to re-take one or more ASVAB/AFCT tests.

## On-line Test Scheduling

Training Center Cape May is trying out an Internet-based program for scheduling tests, officer program interviews, and pretty much anything the imagination can come up with.

So, if you'd like to schedule an EOCT or AQE, you can now go to the reservation web site ([http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/TraCen\\_Cape\\_May/EOCTs](http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/TraCen_Cape_May/EOCTs)).

Other ESOs who want to create a similar testing reservation system (it's free!) should contact me for information.

## 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 DANES 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](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](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.

## 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.

## 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.