

TraCen Cape May Education Update #302

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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
HS2 Alex Elliott	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1
HS2 Yusuf Williams	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1*
HS2 Alex Elliott	HSWL FO Cape May	E-PME-6*
YN2 Jamel Brown	TraCen (Recruit SPO)	E-PME-6
YN2 Kathy Lawton	TraCen (Recruit training)	E-PME-6

* First attempt

Well done, both 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.

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 **Dependents** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dependents.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 is my first attempt to do so.

This week, the issue is the use (misuse) of quotation marks for emphasis.

Rather than reinvent the wheel, I've copied and pasted below an excellent discussion of this issue from DailyWritings (<http://www.dailywritingtips.com/>). It references comments made to the blog by a reader named Daniel.

As Daniel's post pointed out, quotation marks can be used to express irony, as in the sentence:

Uncle Joe was really "sad" about it.

The use of the quotation marks indicate that Uncle Joe was not, in fact, sad at all. The quotation marks are a signal to the reader about the true meaning of the sentence.

When the quotation marks are misused, however, they can obscure your meaning. I saw a flyer on a college campus that read:

"You're invited"
Resume workshop
"All" majors
"Free"

The person who made the flyer apparently wanted to emphasize "you're invited," "all," and "free," but the misplaced quotation marks just make it seem as though the writer is being sarcastic [i.e., the word or phrase in quotation marks isn't really what the words say it is].

You can see many illustrations (often humorous) of this misusage you might see in everyday situations at <http://www.unnecessaryquotes.com/>.

If you want to emphasize a word or phrase, use **boldface** or *italics*.

Another misusage of quotation marks is with widely understood but colloquial words and phrases. But to paraphrase Strunk & White, colloquialisms and slang require no quotation marks. Here are two examples.

Congress is considering reducing the sentencing disparity for use of powdered versus "crack" cocaine.

There's no reason to put the word *crack* in quotation marks in that sentence any more than it would be necessary to use them with "powdered" or any other adjective.

My brother told me to "buzz off".

Again, colloquialisms and slang don't require quotation marks.

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.

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.

Proposed New Education Grant for Spouses

The Coast Guard Foundation is considering offering an education grant for the spouses of uniformed Coast Guard personnel. Nothing is set in stone yet, however – including whether there will actually be such a grant.

But to assist with the decision-making and rule-drafting processes, the Coast Guard Institute has asked ESOs to survey our customers about this proposed grant. If your spouse is currently pursuing a college degree or is interested in pursuing a degree, and haven't already completed the survey, please take a few minutes to fill out the survey at the following link: <https://surveys.uscg.mil/Community/se.ashx?s=6F20F774477EAE45>

NOTE: If you select "Other" in question 5, please don't include items in your response to question 6 which you already included in question 5. (The same goes for questions 7 and 8.)

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.

Avoid Student Loans!

There's very little reason to take out student loans when so much money is available from scholarships and other (free) sources of financial assistance for college. In addition to tuition assistance for Coast Guard employees (military and civilian) and the various versions of the GI Bill (for current military personnel, veterans, and in some cases dependents), there are scholarships, fellowships/grants, grants-in-aid, and awards of many types.

You don't have to be a brainiac or jock to qualify for scholarships.

TraCen's Education Center has a few copies of a hardback book – *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents* – which lists dozens, if not hundreds, of these for you or your dependents. There are only a couple more of these books available, first come, first served.

When using this book, remember: there are thousands of scholarships that aren't listed in it which you or your son/daughter may qualify for. Leave no stone unturned when looking for scholarships and check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>.

The Education Center also has a number of other references you can use to find scholarships and grants.

Parents of College-Bound Children: Attention!

If you want to give your college-bound kids something useful and lucrative to do this summer, CollegeWeekLive (<http://www.collegeweeklive.com/>) has five tips.

- Refine your list of potential schools. Save time, effort, and application fees: think about important criteria (such as size, location, or available majors) and be sure to include match schools, reach schools, and safety schools.
- Keep a journal. Detailing your experiences is important when writing college essays. Record details, thoughts, and feelings about your summer activities and use when you write college essays.
- Get connected to colleges. Visit college websites, sign up for e-newsletters, connect to them on Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube, and plan to visit them at CollegeWeekLive. Colleges notice when a student takes the initiative!
- Take time for test prep. Sign up for a SAT/ACT prep course (see next item), use computer software, or do the practice tests.
- Plan ahead for the Fall. Schedule your campus visits, note application and financial aid deadlines, and most importantly, review the CollegeWeekLive Events Schedule (http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en_CA/guest/college_events) and plan the free online events you will be attending.

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.

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.

Taking CLEP Tests

There seem to be some misconceptions about CLEP tests and other tests you can take to earn college credit.

#1 CLEP tests are the only tests available by which you can earn college credit. **False**

CLEP (College Level Examination Program) tests are but one type of tests you can take to earn college credit. Others are DSSTs, ECEs (Excelsior College Exams), TECEP tests (Thomas Edison College Examination Program), and others. Each test is the equivalent of the final exam for one or more college courses.

#2 You can pass a CLEP or similar test without studying for it. **False**

While there are people who have enough detailed knowledge to pass these tests without studying, most people can't. As noted above, they're the equivalent of college final exams. If you could walk into college exam room and pass a final without any study, that's fantastic. But most people can't.

On the other hand, many people in the Coast Guard (depending on their rate and training) could probably pass some of the DSSTs without more than a review of the subject matter. These include "Substance Abuse", "Here's to Your Health", "Ethics in America", "Introduction to Computing", and "Human Resource Management".

#3 CLEP tests are courses or are associated with specific courses. **False**

CLEP tests, DSSTs, ECEs, TECEP tests and other tests you can take to earn college credit are stand-alone affairs; they don't have courses associated with them. To prepare for the tests, you should first read the official study guide (usually no more than 12 pages). Most of the official study guide consists of practice test questions. At the end of each guide is a list of recommended study resources to consult, which are usually college text books. There are also unofficial (and more thorough) study guides available for many of the tests, which you can buy.

#4 Since CLEP tests are free, I can take one to see what it's like, then re-take it six months later. **False**

If you fail to pass a CLEP test or DSST you'll have to pay for all re-tests (on the same test). That is, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) will not pay for you to re-take any of these tests. If you took a test before 20 May 2010, failed, and want to take it again (after the required 180-day waiting period), DANTES will pay for re-tests until 11 December 2010.

Career Assessment & Planning Tools

TraCen Cape May has a number of career assessment and planning tools available at no charge. These include:

- Dr. John Holland's *Self-Directed Search (SDS)*,
- the *Strong Interest Inventory*,
- the *Kuder Career Planning System*, and
- *DISCOVER*.

The SDS and Strong Interest Inventory are paper-based instruments; the Kuder and DISCOVER systems are computer-based. For info on how to use them, contact me by e-mail to set up an appointment.

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>.

Foreign Language Software & CG Foundation Grants

Before dropping a few hundred dollars for software to help you learn a foreign language (such as Tell Me More <http://www.tellmemore.com/>, Rosetta Stone <http://www.rosettastone.com/>, and others), make sure it suits your needs and your budget. If you're interested in being able to use the target language in social situations, this software may be what you're looking for. On the other hand, if you want to develop fluency so you can put it to work in Coast Guard-specific situations, you should definitely check it out before you buy it.

Also, although the Coast Guard Foundation has added the cost of foreign language software to its list of reimbursable items, be aware that funding for these grants is not guaranteed and is sporadic. The money for these grants comes from private donors who may or may not make regular contributions in amounts which may vary greatly from person to person and month to month. As a result, you shouldn't expect to receive a grant just because you request it.

The bottom line is that if you can't afford to be out the cost of the software for a long time (maybe forever), don't buy it.

For information on CG Foundation grants and the application process, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#cgf>.

Tuition Assistance & Grade Reports

After you've completed a course paid for with tuition assistance (TA), remember that to avoid a nastygram from the Navy, you must submit a grade report for that course to your ESO at most 42 days after the end date listed on your authorization. It's your responsibility – not your school's – to provide this grade report.

If at all possible, please send your grade report, rather than your transcript. We're interested in seeing only the grades you earned for the courses listed on your authorization, not all grades earned at a particular college or university.

The grade report you send to your ESO must include your employee ID number or SSN, either on the grade report itself or in the text of the e-mail you use to send it to your ESO.

BM Strikers

If you're striking for BM3, you've already got the BM3 course, which includes charts, dividers, and other useful stuff. But consider also getting the Basic Radar User (BARAD) and Maneuvering Boards (MANBD) courses which are also available from the Coast Guard Institute through your ESO.

The BARAD courses "provides training in basic radar operation of the AN/SPS-64 and 66 radars, scope interpretation, and plotting" while the MANBD course "provides training in the uses of maneuvering boards in solving problems which involve relative motion; speed; CPAs; collision avoidance; station taking; contact interception; true, relative, and desired wind; and direct plotting procedures."

Each of these courses has been evaluated by ACE and the credit associated with them may be applicable to a college degree. The fact that you took the initiative to take these courses and pass the associated tests also looks good on your EER.

Wondering What to Major In?

Are you interested in getting a college degree, but unsure about what to major in? Drop by the Education Center and pick up a copy of *College Majors that Work*. This book has an excellent, easy-to-follow system for determining what major best matches your interests.

You should also check out chapters 3 ("Career Exploration Information") and 5 ("Researching Employer and Labor Market Information") of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Before you dive into a major, with the intention of going into a particular career field, read these chapters. They can help you figure out if there's actually a future in your chosen field. The last thing you want is to invest a lot of time and money in getting a particular degree only to find when you're done that there aren't many jobs available in the field you prepared for or that advancement in that field is slow or frozen.

Are On-line College Courses for You?

The University of Georgia has come up with an on-line assessment tool you can use to determine if computer-based distance learning is for you. It's called SORT (Student Online Readiness Tool, <http://www.alt.usg.edu/sort/html/sortlau1.html>) and is based on research that says there are "six main topics closely related to a student's success in the online learning environment". These are, Experience with Technology, Access to Technology, Study Habits, Lifestyle, Goals and Purposes, and Learning Preferences. "Each section of SORT has a brief description followed by a questionnaire. Based on your responses to questions, feedback is provided on your personal readiness profile, along with suggested strategies for success and links to more information."

Online Academic Skills Course (OASC)

Peterson's (the owner of OASC) will be performing a data center move starting on Friday, 30 July. The DANTES OASC website will not be available between 1900 on Friday, 30 July and approximately 0800 on Monday, 02 August (all times Eastern).

If you're about ready to start taking college courses or want to improve one or more ASVAB scores, OASC is for you. It's designed to help you build your math and verbal skills, which will help you score well on exams and excel in your career – in or out of the Coast Guard. Except for the period noted above, it's available free 24/7 to you and your family on the Internet.

How does it work? You first take an initial test to measure your strengths and weaknesses. Then you'll receive a personalized set of lessons based on your test results. Those lessons will engage you with interactive activities, flash

cards, quizzes, and practice tests. Once you've completed all the lessons, you'll take another test to evaluate your progress.

For more information, to register, and to get started, go to <http://www.petersons.com/dantes>.

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/mydoc/?uri=wcm%3a5b18ff004d89b9a6ae7f7be259abd3cf4>.

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.