

TraCen Cape May Education Update #303

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Plan Ahead!!!

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

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

Question of the Week

Q: I've taken a lot of CLEP tests and DSSTs over the years, but have misplaced most of the score reports I've gotten after taking them. I understand DANTES will send a transcript of tests I've taken to whatever schools I want, but I'm confused as to whether I have to pay \$20 for a transcript for each test or \$20 for one transcript showing all tests.

A: You're in luck; you pay \$20 for the transcript and can specify which test results you want included on it. That is, you can ask that all test scores appear on the transcript or just specific ones. And you'll have to pay only \$20 no matter how many or few scores appear on it.

In case you don't have the most current version of the form, here's where you can download a version you can fill out on your computer: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/DANTESxscriptRequest.pdf>.

Although many of your scores on CLEP tests and DSSTs are listed on your Coast Guard Institute transcript, it's rare for colleges to accept such scores as proof when deciding whether to allow you transfer credit for them. And this applies not only to scores on these tests, but to courses you completed at other colleges as well. You'll need to provide an official transcript from each college as well as an official DANTES transcript of scores on credit-by-exam tests taken while you were in the military.

Official transcripts are printed on special paper that easily shows if it's been tampered with. They're also embossed by the registrar with the school's seal and are sent in specially sealed and marked envelopes. If you or anyone other than officials at the receiving school opens the envelope before it reaches that school's officials, it will almost certainly not be accepted.

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

Web Page in the Spotlight

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

Grammar & Usage Corner

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

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

Aloud is an adverb meaning to speak in an audible manner (i.e., not whispering or silently). "Everyone in the library looked at Johnny when, aloud, he said, "Mommy, I need to pee."

Allowed is the past tense of the verb *allow*, which usually means to authorize. "Although she was on restriction, the OOD allowed her to go to receive a visitor on the quarterdeck."

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

College Info Briefing at CGAS Atlantic City

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

Topics we can discuss include:

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

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

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.

Local Career Training & Certification Courses

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

There are professional development courses in subjects related to real estate, project management, non-profit fundraising, self-employment, notary preparation, and a number of others.

(<http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/classes/professionalDev.htm>)

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

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

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

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

Stop by the Education Center to see hard-copy booklets on these courses or visit

<http://www.atlantic.edu/conted/index.htm> (ACCC courses) or <http://www.capemaytech.com/2010fallbrochure.pdf> (Cape May County Technical School).

Don't Assume . . .

. . . that because the Navy will soon impose quarterly caps on distribution of TA funds (starting on 01 October) the Coast Guard will follow suit.

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

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

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.

How to Go to College Almost for Free

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

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

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

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

Free SAT & ACT Preparation Software

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

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

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

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>.

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."

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs and AQEs*

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

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

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

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

Thinking of Teaching?

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Troops to Teachers also provides counseling and referral services to military personnel interested in beginning a second career in public education as a teacher. And the DANTES Troops to Teachers office will help you identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification, and employment opportunities. The main web site (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/index.asp) has all kinds of information about the program. Including a new on-line way to determine if you're eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers: http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp.

Leaving the Coast Guard?

If you're leaving the Coast Guard within the next twelve months (whether through retirement, resignation, or expiration of your enlistment), you should be making plans for what you'll be doing after you take off your uniform for the last time. Check out the information on my web site related to career transition (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/careertrans.asp>).

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one later. If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while

maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector (<http://www.fedjobs.gov/>), governmental entities at all levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – provide similar benefits.

Microsoft Software Home Use Program

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

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

Free College Reference Books

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

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

Also available, are the following:

- *Need a Liff?* (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.