

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #340

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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:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Work Site</b>	<b>Test</b>
SA Matthew Kramer	TraCen (ceremonial)	E-PME-4*

\* First attempt

Also of note is the fact that after years of patiently and persistently taking distance learning courses, Ms. Jennifer Rush (wife of former TraCen CC, now CWO3 Guy Rush) completed a bachelor of science degree in organizational leadership (with a minor in dispute management and resolution) from Penn State University.

Well done, SA Kramer, and congratulations Ms. Rush!

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:** I'm taking graduate courses that cost more than TA pays. Can I use my GI Bill and TA together?

**A:** If I understand what you're asking, the answer is "no". If you have the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP you can't receive reimbursement from your GI Bill program for courses paid for with TA money. And if you're under the new (Post-9/11) GI Bill, you can't use it and TA to pay for the same course.

This doesn't mean you can't use both TA and a GI Bill benefit at the same time, however. You just can't use them both for the same course. If you're taking 18 credits, for example, you could opt to receive MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP reimbursements for 12 of those credits (at the maximum rate) and use TA to pay for the remaining 6.

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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Web Page in the Spotlight

There's a lot of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting **Advanced Education Programs** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/advanced.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused/mispronounced words. This week, *complement* and *compliment* (definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

The word **complement** is a noun, in ordinary usage, meaning something that fills up, completes, or makes perfect OR two angles whose sum is 90 degrees. It can also mean the whole body or number of personnel assigned to a ship. Examples: "The husband thought of his wife as his complement"; "The corporation's last purchase was the Ajax Company, which it considered the complement to all its other acquisitions"; "Angles of 35 degrees and 65 degrees are complementary, in that they add up to 90 degrees"; "The aircraft carrier's complement was 5,285 sailors and officers, not counting its air wing."

The word **compliment** can be a noun or a verb, depending on how it's used. As a noun, it's an expression of esteem, respect, affection, or admiration; a flattering remark ("Using the invention was the highest compliment someone could pay the inventor"). As a verb, it means to express esteem, respect, affection, or admiration ("The CO complimented the seaman on her uniform at the personnel inspection").

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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## TA & Dropped/Changed Courses

If you drop a course you're using TA to pay for, remember you have to go down two separate but parallel paths: the school's and the Coast Guard's.

With respect to the school's path, make sure you follow its procedures for dropping a course; don't just stop going to class.

And after you've dropped the course, be sure you let your ESO know. If you don't, the Coast Guard Institute (and Navy) won't have any idea you're not taking it and will expect a grade report after the course ends. When you fail to provide a grade report, two things will happen. First, eTA will be locked (meaning you won't be able to request TA again until it's unlocked). Second, you'll get a series of nastygrams from the Navy telling you to provide a grade report or repay the TA paid to the school for the course. This will happen even if you didn't take the course, even if the school didn't submit a bill to the Navy for payment for the course!

The same is true if anything about your course changes: dates, number of credits, course name, course number, tuition cost – anything. That is, make sure you've done whatever your school requires to be done (if anything) and make sure you send whatever information changed to your ESO along with the previous information. For example, if you couldn't get into a course that's on your authorization and everything but the name of the course is the same, send your ESO the name and number of the course you planned to take as well as the name and number of the course you actually will be taking. She'll have a new authorization generated which will contain the corrected information. That authorization will be sent directly to you and you'll give it to your school.

When you substitute a correct authorization for another one, make sure the people you talk with at your school know that the previous version is no longer any good, that they should shred it (or give it back to you to shred), and that they must send the replacement (not the original version) to the Navy for payment.

## CLEP Composition Test

A year ago, three CLEP English tests were replaced by two new tests.

- English Composition was replaced by College Composition Modular.
- English Composition with Essay was replaced by College Composition.
- Freshman College Composition was replaced by College Composition Modular.

The College Composition test contains multiple-choice items and two mandatory essays which are scored by the people who own the CLEP tests. It is only offered at national test centers ([http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch\\_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp)). That is, ESOs may not administer this test.

The College Composition Modular test contains a multiple-choice section supplemented with an optional essay section that is provided either by your college or CLEP. On this test, the essay section is scored by your college. ESOs who are DANTES Test Control Officers (TCOs) may order the essay section from CLEP only after you've passed the multiple-choice part of the test.

For more information about these tests, go to [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/ex\\_colcomp.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/ex_colcomp.html).

## Military Scholarship Opportunity

Until 02 September 2011, the National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services (NAIMES) is accepting applications for the 2011 Student Spotlight Scholarships. All Coast Guard personnel (regulars and reservists) who are on active duty and are currently pursuing a degree using tuition assistance are eligible to apply.

A \$1,200 cash prize and commemorative plaque will be awarded to the top project in three categories: (1) undergraduate student with less than 60 credits earned; (2) undergraduate student with 60 or more credits; and 3) graduate student.

To demonstrate your academic achievement, the selection committee would like you to address, in any format you select (essay, prose, art, video, etc.) how your military service has contributed to your sense of citizenry. (Art and video projects must be submitted electronically or on DVD.)

You may address the theme from a macro or micro perspective; the key is to identify what you consider your academic accomplishment(s) and then link the accomplishment(s) to your military career. Note: There is not a set minimum or maximum page length for an essay or other written submission.

The application deadline is Friday, 02 September 2011. Application, resume, and project must be submitted online at [www.naimes.org/upload.asp](http://www.naimes.org/upload.asp). Winners will be notified no later than 28 October 2011.

For detailed information about the NAIMES Student Spotlight Scholarship, to go [www.naimes.org/spotlight.asp](http://www.naimes.org/spotlight.asp) or contact Ms. Cheri Arfsten, Director, Military and Veterans Programs, Pikes Peak Community College at 719-502-3054 or [cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu](mailto:cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu).

## Thinking of Starting Your Own Business?

If you're thinking about starting your own business, either while you're still in uniform or after you leave the Coast Guard, check out a sampling of resources for entrepreneurs at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>. There you'll find general resources applicable to all types of small businesses on many different subjects (e.g., drafting a business plan, finding funding, etc.).

There are also sections aimed at those interested in starting not-for-profit businesses and those interested in social entrepreneurship. Contrary to the popular notion, not-for-profit doesn't mean "no profit" or that you can't earn a substantial salary. It just means most of the profit has to be put toward specific things, usually plowed back into the business. There's also a section with links to labor market information.

Finally, drop by the Education Center to pick up a copy of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Chapters 7 ("Self-Employment and Small Business") and 8 ("Temporary Work, Contract Employment, Freelancing, Teleworking, and Volunteering") have many great leads.

## Watch Out for Diploma Mills Masquerading as Legitimate Colleges

(courtesy of Troy Blappert, full-time ESO at Base Seattle)

Before responding to an ad or other hype describing how easy it is to get a college degree, check out a web site that will help you figure out if the school you're interested in is a legitimate. "Phony online colleges crank out fake diplomas and phony college degrees at a dizzying pace," one page of the web site's *Diploma Mill Police* page states (<http://www.geteducated.com/diploma-mill-police>).

"Diploma Mills almost always promise a fast college degree based on life experience. GetEducated's online education researchers have prepared these Top 10 Signs of an Online College Degree Mill to help online students protect themselves from this popular online education scam."

In addition to a database of degree/diploma mills, the site provides a way for you to report buy-a-degree scams and has short articles that describe how to recognize a degree/diploma mill, where most are located, whether saying you got your degree on-line is a good idea, a list of fake accrediting agencies, the pros and cons of "life experience on-line degrees", and much more. And, to quote Mr. Blappert, "It also highlights schools that are nationally accredited as opposed to regionally, and it explains the difference and potential drawbacks."

## New Requirements for TA Users

If you're applying for tuition assistance (TA) and are working toward an undergraduate (associate's or bachelor's) degree, you'll have to provide your ESO with a copy of your most recent transcript from the Coast Guard Institute before she can process your TA request. The transcript must be less than four years old. An unofficial copy is fine.

To get a transcript, you'll need to download and complete the "Application for Transcript" (form CGI-1561) ([http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG\\_Form\\_1561.pdf](http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1561.pdf)). Make sure you read the instructions for each section before filling out that section.

## 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, you can watch it in the Education Center. Please contact me ([andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto: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.

## Do I Need a Degree to Get the Job I Want?

Many Coast Guard personnel are more interested in working with their hands (for example, carpentry, gunsmithing, plumbing, locksmithing, electrical work) than they are in sitting in class for five hours a day to get a degree. Still, everyone tells them they need to get a degree to succeed in the civilian labor market so they feel they have to do so.

But before you jump into a degree program, think about your ultimate employment goal and work backwards from it. When planning a car trip, you don't just start driving and hope to end up somewhere you wanted to go. You have a destination in mind and figure out the best route to get there. This should be the way you also plan your career, both in the Coast Guard and in the civilian world.

Let's say you want to work as a video game designer. Assuming you want to work for a company that does nothing but design and market video games, call a half dozen of them and talk with someone who makes hiring decisions in the HR department or the like. Ask what kind of training and/or education they're looking for in new hires. Ask specifically if the people they hire need a degree, a certificate of some kind, or if demonstrated ability (e.g., via a portfolio or other samples of your work) is good enough.

Remember: a college degree requires you to take many courses totally unrelated to your field of interest. Roughly half the courses you take to earn a degree fall into this category. If you're more interested in acquiring the knowledge necessary to start working in the field that interests you, a degree may not be for you.

There are a number of paths you can take once you know whether most likely employers require a degree. You can

- work with someone who has the knowledge you want to acquire (a mentor-protégé or apprenticeship relationship, formal or informal);
- learn it on your own via resources available for free (often on the Internet, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#knowledge>);
- take college courses just in your area of interest and, perhaps, earn an academic certificate in the process (see "Academic Certificates" at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/degreedesc.asp#certs>); or
- take non-credit courses that you have to pay for, for example Excelsior College's Professional Development courses (<http://www.excelsior.edu/web/center-for-professional-development>) or the Graduate School's courses (<http://graduateschool.edu/>), which GI Bill education benefits will likely cover.

First find out if a degree is something you need or want. If you don't need a degree, but you want one and/or what you learn will be useful, by all means work toward one. The point is, don't jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

## Is Distance Learning for You?

Because of its convenience (no need to leave the house to attend classes), distance learning appeals to working people – especially to military personnel. This fact means many Coast Guard personnel (who are often not near large population centers) have opportunities for higher education they might not have had in the past.

But before you plunk down the application fee for a distance learning course, check out the information about distance learning at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp>. And before you hop on the on-line course bandwagon, spend a little time with the University of Georgia's on-line assessment tool to help you determine if computer-based distance learning is for you (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#01>).

## Credit-by-Exam Test Preparation

If you're preparing to take a credit-by-exam test (e.g., CLEP test, DSST, or ECE), check out the Coast Guard Institute's new library of study materials (including, in most cases, on-line courses) for each of the 111 different tests. Everything's accessible via the Internet at [http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active\\_duty/go\\_to\\_college/earn\\_credits/dantes\\_library/default.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/earn_credits/dantes_library/default.asp).

## Veterans Technology Certificate Program

Syracuse University, in conjunction with JPMorgan Chase, has created a new Veterans Technology Certificate Program around the university's Global Enterprise Technology (GET) curriculum. GET integrates "coursework with real-world, on-the-job experience. The purpose of the program is to help veterans interested in technology careers in global companies to move toward that goal.

The program is self-paced and computer-based (completely on-line). Program administrators estimate it will take approximately 240 hours (six weeks of full-time work) to complete. The only application requirements are that you:

- have served on active duty since 10 September 2001,
- are preparing to separate (e.g., checking out or attending a TAP seminar before separating) or are a veteran,
- have demonstrated a genuine interest in and aptitude for technology,
- are able to commit a minimum of four hours per day to the program, and
- submit a complete application (consisting of an application form, a résumé, and two references).

For more information, go to <http://veterans.syr.edu/JPMC/faq.html>. To download the application, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VTCP.pdf>.

## Make Your OCS Narrative Memo Stand Out

One of the main anxiety-inducing parts of the officer program application process is the narrative memo. Almost all applicants ask me a variation of the question, “Where can I find a template for the memo?”

The short answer is: “There isn’t one.”

The narrative memo is supposed to show the interview board and, more important, the selection board how **you** write and (indirectly) how you think. Because you can’t always explain your views or findings to decision-makers in person, a big part of being an officer is writing: everything from e-mails to messages to memos to position papers to massive reports.

But even if that weren’t the case, members of the selection board have nothing else that comes from you directly to use in making their decision. That being the case, the narrative memo is your only way to talk directly to them and sell them on the idea that you – of the hundreds of applicants – should be chosen. That being the case, you not only want to be able to explain yourself clearly and concisely, but (optimally) in an engaging manner. You want to hook them when they read your first sentence, make each succeeding sentence matter to them, give them such a good idea of who you are that they’ll be thinking, as they finish reading, “That’s somebody I’d want in *my* wardroom!”

How do you write a 1½-page memo that does that? Consider taking a course on writing creative nonfiction. What’s creative nonfiction? It’s a form of writing which “uses literary styles and techniques to create factually accurate narratives”. Check out <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/druker/nonfic.html> and <http://www.gartistic.com/ar/creative-nonfiction-writing.php> for good (and brief) explanations of just what creative nonfiction is.

A number of reputable schools offer such courses, which can be applied toward a degree (making TA available to pay for them). Examples are those offered by the University of Wisconsin ([http://distancelearning.wisconsin.edu/course\\_info.cfm?id=1997&source=1](http://distancelearning.wisconsin.edu/course_info.cfm?id=1997&source=1)) and Empire State College in New York (<http://www.esc.edu/admin/esc/cdl/cdlcat.nsf/byid/67D8D2FCBD5510FF852575C3006F65BF?opendocument>).

If a course seems a bit much, keep in mind your goal and what serving as an officer will entail. A course that will help you improve your writing will pay off in both the short-run (making you more competitive in the selection process) and in the long-run (making it easier for you to write throughout your career). But if you decide you absolutely don’t want to take a course, at least get a good book, read it thoroughly, and apply what you learned to your memo.

For more on the narrative memo, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/narrative.asp>.

## Civilian Career Myths

Excelsior College’s alumni magazine often includes articles of use to military personnel about to enter or re-enter the civilian work force. The latest issue has an article entitled “Fact or Fiction: The Truth About Career Myths” (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/careermyths.pdf>). You can also read “Skills Employers Seek” (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/skills.pdf>) and the Fall/Winter 2008 issue.

Check ‘em out!

## Reserve Resource Guide

In addition to the web site of the Coast Guard Office of Reserve Affairs (<http://www.uscg.mil/reserve/>), Reservists should also check out TraCen Petaluma's Reserve Resource Guide (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/tracenpetaluma/RRG/>). Together, these provide info on and links to info on every facet of Coast Guard affairs related to service in the Reserve.

## 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 at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Leaving the Coast Guard?

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

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

- Jobs With a Future
- How to Develop Job Resources
- The Resume
- The Cover Letter: A Resume Should Never Stand Alone
- The Mature Resume: The Resume with Experience
- The Follow-up Letter
- The Interview
- How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment
- Civilian Again
- Leaving the Service ... and Beginning Your Next Career
- Military to Civilian: Your Resume and Job Hunt
- Effective Goal Setting: How to Reach the Goals You Set for Yourself

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. ***If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one (or a transcript) later.***

If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home>).

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

## 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.