

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #364

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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>
HS2 Mindy Sawmiller	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1*
HS2 Kenneth Mitchell	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1
HS3 Ryan Braswell	HSWL FO Cape May	HS2*
HS3 Katherine Waters	HSWL FO Cape May	HS2*
GM3 Joshua Mathews	TraCen (Armory)	GM2

\* First attempt

Well done, all 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.

## Question of the Week

**Q:** Tuition assistance won't cover the whole cost of my college courses and I don't want to use my GI Bill benefits. Is there any other funding available to help me?

**A:** With one exception, Coast Guard personnel can use any kind of financial aid at the same time they're using tuition assistance (TA): scholarships, grants, loans, fellowships, etc. The only exception is that you can't receive or use GI Bill benefits for courses TA is paying for.

With respect to scholarships, the Department of Education has compiled a short list of scholarships specifically targeted at military families (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/ScholarshipsforMilitary.pdf>). But if you're interested in scholarships don't limit yourself to these or others that anyone can easily find. Just as low-hanging fruit is the first to be picked or eaten by animals, you'll find competition the keenest for scholarships that are easiest to find.

Information about scholarships (including how to find and apply for them) is on my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>). If you're serious about getting as much scholarship money as you can, I highly recommend you get a copy of *How to Go To College Almost for Free* by Ben Kaplan. It's the best guide to scholarships I've found.

You can also find a list of federal grant programs on the DoEd's web site at [http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/factsheet\\_GrantProgram.pdf](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/factsheet_GrantProgram.pdf). And if you or a dependent is trying to fund a graduate degree, check out <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/gradguide.pdf>.

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 *The Servicewide Exam* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/swe.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused words. This week, we'll look at the apostrophe. For some reason, English-speakers tend to overuse apostrophes perhaps because they believe that it's better to use them than not when in doubt. Actually, the general rule is just the opposite: when in doubt, *don't* use an apostrophe.

The infographic at <http://theoatmeal.com/comics/apostrophe> provides the whole story.

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).

## May Servicewide Exams

As a reminder, the deadline for completing all eligibility requirements for the May servicewide exam (SWE) is 01 February 2012.

For those who've never taken a SWE before (or those who may have forgotten), if you've met all the qualifications (as laid out on your Personal Data Extract or PDE) by 01 February 2012, PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your PDE. **You do not have to (and cannot) request a SWE.**

When your PDE is made available on DirectAccess in early February, make sure you check **everything** on it carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC.

- Are you going to be on leave or TAD on the date of your SWE?
- Will you be in-transit due to a PCS move on the date of your SWE?
- Are you going to be away from the unit listed on your PDE for any other reason on the date of your SWE?

If so, do the following:

- find a unit you know you'll be geographically near on your SWE date,
- contact the ESO at that unit and ask if it's OK to take your SWE there,
- assuming the ESO says "yes", ask for the unit's OPFAC,
- let your SPO know what the name and OPFAC of that unit so PSC knows to change your PDE.

PSC will automatically send your exam to the unit list as your exam board on your PDE.

**Substitute exams are not authorized except in emergencies over which you have no control.** Regular leave (even if you scheduled a Caribbean cruise six months ago) is not an emergency. A wedding – even your own – is not an emergency. For more information on just which circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 3.B.3. of the *Enlisted Accessions, Evaluations, and Advancements Manual*.

If you revise the PDE info concerning your exam site and later find out you won't be able to take your exam there after all or at the scheduled date and time, let your ESO know ASAP.

For more servicewide exam information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/swe.asp>.

## Please Pardon the Mess

If you drop into TraCen Cape May's Education Center any time in the next few weeks, you'll see that the tables which used to be in the center of the main room are gone and there's a mess of computer work stations and boxes around the edges of the room.

Once all the new equipment is in place and once we have Internet and power connections, as many as ten people will be able to take various tests at a time: Coast Guard end-of-course tests/RATs, AQEs, Defense Language Proficiency Tests, the Aviation Selection Test Battery, and college tests.

Also, as soon as possible, TraCen Cape May will become a Pearson VUE testing center (<http://pearsonvue.com/>). This will allow Coast Guard personnel to take NREMT and any of the many other tests Pearson VUE offers without having to drive to Atlantic City.

And I'm working with the CollegeBoard's CLEP manager to see if I might be able to administer on-line CLEP tests (<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/exams.html>) here, so you don't have to drive all the way to Rowan University to take them.

You can see a diagram of what the refurbished Education Center will look like at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/2020120125EdCenter.pdf>. (Thanks to LTJG Michelle Casillo for creating the diagram.)

There's also a proposal in the works to move the video teleconference (VTC) equipment to the Recruiter School in Munro Hall which, in emergencies, will double as the command's Incident Command Post. If it's approved, the area where the

VTC equipment was will open up and allow me to move one of the test stations out of the small “Testing Room” in the lower left corner of the diagram to the space in the lower right-hand corner.

## TEACH Grant Program

The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program provides grants of up to \$4,000 per year to students who agree to teach for four years at an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families and to meet other requirements. The terms and conditions of this teaching service obligation are explained in the TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve that you must sign before you receive a TEACH Grant.

For more information, go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/TEACHGrant.pdf>.

## Five Surprising \$100K Jobs That Don't Require a Degree

Practically everyone you talk with about your future tells you, “Get a degree!!” But while data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that people with degrees generally face a reduced prospect of unemployment and have a higher earning potential ([http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_chart\\_001.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm), <http://www.focus.com/images/view/8740/>), that's not the case for everyone.

A recent article on Monster.com highlights this fact and lists five high-paying careers available to people who don't have college degrees (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/jobmisc029.doc>).

## 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.

## Summer Career Academy

The National Energy Center of Excellence at Bismarck State College (North Dakota) is offering the first annual Summer Career Academy to youth ages 14-16 on 19 to 21 June 2012. The academy will provide participants with an exciting opportunity to engage in energy-related lab experiments, tour energy facilities, and learn from faculty teaching at a world-class center known for training the industry's workforce.

The cost of attending? Nothing. Participants will attend free of charge thanks to support from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Montana Dakota Utilities, Otter Tail Power Cooperative, and Bismarck State College. Students will stay in the college's dorms and food will be provided.

Space is limited to 20 students. Interested students need to apply by 01 March 2012. Applications are at <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/nece/academy/>. Students who are selected will be notified by 23 March 2012. For more information on the academy, contact Joan Trygg at 701-224-2445 or at [Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu](mailto:Joan.Trygg@bismarckstate.edu).

## On-line Engineering Certificates and Degrees

If you're interested in engineering and certain technology-related degrees, you've probably been frustrated not to be able to find many available through distance learning. Bismarck State University in North Dakota has engineering certificate and degree programs, particularly in the electrical, petroleum, and nuclear energy fields, which you can pursue on-line.

It also offers many other non-engineering certificates and degrees.

The total for tuition and fees is \$138.54 per semester credit. This applies to active duty military personnel, veterans, and their dependents. For more information, go to <http://bscmilitaryonline.com/default.asp>.

## Unpredictable Schedule Keeping You from Earning a Degree?

A lot of people attached to operational units or who otherwise can't predict when they'll have free time to study are frustrated by traditional term-based colleges. (By "term-based" I mean schools that run on fixed terms such as semesters and quarters.) Often times, an assignment is due or a test must be taken on a certain date but you get called away by official duties.

There's an easy fix to this dilemma: take courses from a school that offers self-paced courses.

All the schools listed on my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>) offer such courses. Most have whole degree programs via self-paced courses, some only offer a few courses. You can start a course at any time – there are no fixed deadlines for registering, completing lessons, taking tests, or even finishing the course. You can register at any time of the year and work at your own pace.

Some schools require you to complete their courses in four months, but most give you nine months, and a few give you a year or even two years. Those with shorter time frames grant extensions. Most of these schools allow you to complete these courses in as little as six weeks and some have no minimum time requirement at all.

An added benefit of these programs is that in most cases tuition is lower than the maximum tuition assistance will cover. (The lower the tuition, the more courses per year you can take using tuition assistance.) And these are not just for military personnel.

## 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 is from **Berkeley College**, a regionally-accredited school here in New Jersey.

The school offers many associate's and bachelor's degrees on-line in business-related fields ([http://berkeleycollege.edu/academics\\_bc/school\\_of\\_business/1764.htm](http://berkeleycollege.edu/academics_bc/school_of_business/1764.htm)) and in the health and criminal justice fields ([http://berkeleycollege.edu/academics\\_bc/school\\_of\\_professional\\_studies/1734.htm](http://berkeleycollege.edu/academics_bc/school_of_professional_studies/1734.htm)). For military personnel, the tuition is \$166.67/quarter credit, which means tuition assistance will cover it completely.

If you have questions, you can contact Mr. Frank Colavita, Coordinator of Military Affairs, at [fmc@Berkeleycollege.edu](mailto:fmc@Berkeleycollege.edu).

## Forensic Science Careers

Have crime procedurals on TV gotten you interested in possibly working in the field of criminal forensics? If so, check out these web sites to see if the reality matches your imagination.

- [American Academy of Forensic Sciences](#)
- [International Association for Identification](#)
- [National Association of Medical Examiners](#)
- [Society of Forensic Toxicologists](#)
- [American Board of Forensic Toxicology](#)

## For-Profit Schools Again in Spotlight

A series of articles in recent issues of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* discusses lax academic standards at for-profit schools and a study's finding that "students who attend for-profit colleges are less likely to be employed than comparable students from nonprofit institutions, and tend to have lower earnings six years after enrolling". You can read these and other articles at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/articles.asp#for-profits>.

## More on For-Profit Colleges

An article in the October 2011 issue of *Harper's Magazine* is a must-read for any student attending or considering attending a for-profit college or university. If you're not sure whether a school is for-profit, ask your ESO.

The article, "Leveling the Field: What I learned from for-profit education" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/edmisc022.pdf>), mainly discusses the University of Phoenix. However, new rules from the Department of Education will likely make what the author describes (especially the required "general education" requirements) common to all for-profit schools.

## Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you're interested in taking college courses, but are unsure where to start or what to do first, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>. The seven steps provided there will help you

- understand terminology and how you progress toward a degree,
- figure out what you want a degree for,
- determine what you want to major in,
- find colleges/universities which offer degrees in your desired major,
- request degree plans from your chosen school(s),
- submit a request for an education assessment and to have official transcripts of your assessment sent to colleges you've identified, and
- pick your first course.

This is the hardest part of the process. Once you've done this, it's just a matter of deciding which type of funding to use (tuition assistance, GI Bill, scholarships, loans, or a combination of these) and applying for it. Tuition assistance (TA) and GI Bill funding is easy to use and readily available. You've got to plan ahead if you want to get scholarships because applications are usually due at specific times of the year that might not coincide with dates your courses begin. And loans, while they're readily available, should be your last recourse.

## CGES Scholarships

The Coast Guard Exchange System is accepting applications for three scholarships (\$1,500, \$750, and \$500) based on academic achievements, accomplishments, interests, and participation and leadership in school-oriented and volunteer activities. **The deadline for applications is 28 February 2012.**

You can find complete details at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGPSC145-11.pdf>.

## Sea Service Women Scholarship

(courtesy of SueAnn Walter, full-time ESO at the Coast Guard Academy)

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,500 scholarship for a relative (male or female) of a sea service woman. The application deadline is **09 March 2012**.

"Eligibility is open to any female or male relative of a sea service woman who has served or is currently serving in the Navy, Coast Guard, or Marine Corps or their Reserve components." Applicants may be related to the sea service woman by birth, legal adoption, or marriage.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/WAVES-scholarship.pdf>

## CG Foundation Scholarships

The Coast Guard Foundation recently announced its scholarship programs for 2012 (see ALCOAST 584/11, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcoast584-11.pdf>). Check out the ALCOAST for details on these eight scholarships. **The application deadline is 15 March 2012.**

## Having Difficulty with Math?

Are you brushing up on math basics before re-starting a delayed degree? Mystified by physics? Stymied by certain concepts in your college math course? If so, the on-line Khan Academy may be just what you're looking for to help get

over academic hurdles. A recent article in *Wired* magazine ([http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/07/ff\\_khan?rXFb&mbid=su\\_ppc\\_mag\\_3&rQZb](http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/07/ff_khan?rXFb&mbid=su_ppc_mag_3&rQZb)) will tell you all about it.

Or go to the Khan Academy web site (<http://www.khanacademy.org/>). It's a fantastic tool for learning a whole subject or just mastering a particular concept.

## 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.

## Career & Education Planning Tools

Many people in the Coast Guard – military and civilians alike – are unsure of what career fields best match their personal interests and abilities. While you might be extremely competent at what you're doing in the Coast Guard, you might have skills you'd rather put to use in some other field. ESOs throughout the Coast Guard (including TraCen Cape May's) have access to many different tools you can use to assess your interests and possible ways to earn a living while pursuing those interests.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/discover.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sitestest.asp>.

## TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs\*  
Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests  
Thursdays (0745): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

\* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT, RAT, 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 Mondays and 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. There are a number of web sites at which you can find information useful to military personnel transitioning to civilian life and veterans.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has a veterans' employment web site called "Feds Hire Vets" (<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>). Its purpose is to implement the federal government's strategy for recruiting and employing military veterans. It's intended to be the preeminent source for federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. And the main federal government jobs web site is at <http://www.fedjobs.gov/>.

And (courtesy of Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle) the state of Maryland also has a similar site called the Military to Federal Jobs Crosswalk (Mil2FedJobs, <http://www.mil2fedjobs.com/>) to help you "translate military occupations to federal jobs".

Finally, don't overlook government jobs entities at other levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – which provide benefits similar to those available through the federal government.

## 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.