

TraCen Cape May Education Update #253

In this Update:

- Congratulations!
- Question of the week
- Big College Scholarship Bucks are Won in Summer
- Reservists & TA
- CG transcript and degree plans
- HS2 & HS1 EOCTs
- New DC1 course
- Warning!
- SAR Fundamentals
- Yellow Ribbon provision of new GI Bill
- Last day to register
- Coastline College students
- Scholarships for Reservists
- New college info
- Worried about getting deployed while taking college courses?
- Passing score for new DC2 EOCT
- Foreign language tests
- Yellow Ribbon provision of new GI Bill
- Reimbursement for language software
- CG Foundation & Vander Putten grants update
- What education benefits are available to my dependents?
- New SOCCOAST school
- SOC agreements
- More scholarships!
- New GI Bill & California
- Deciding whether to switch GI Bill programs
- Preparing for CLEP tests & DSSTs
- Just what are DSSTs?
- Tuition assistance & grade reports
- Deploying?
- Leaving the Coast Guard?
- Miscellaneous

Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
SN Thomas Yarbrough	TraCen (Recruit PersRU)	YN3
HS2 Shelby Carlson	TraCen (Health Services)	E-PME-6

Congratulations, also, to ET3 Garth Hubbard (ESD Cape May) for completing an Associate of Applied Sciences degree in Applied Electronic Studies from Thomas Edison State College.

Well done, everyone!

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: Do I incur a service obligation if I use tuition assistance (TA)?

A: Maybe yes, maybe no. The answer depends on your status.

If you're enlisted, you don't incur a service obligation when you use TA. However, before your enlistment expires (or before you retire), you must complete any course you use TA to pay for.

If you're an officer, you incur a service obligation the amount of which depends on whether you're a regular or a Reserve officer. Regular officers incur a two-year obligation for every course they use TA to pay for. Reservists incur a four-year obligation. These obligations begin on the date the course ends. For more information, see ALCOAST 012/09 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST012-09.pdf>).

If you're a civilian Coast Guard employee, you're obliged to continue in the Coast Guard's employ for one month after the date the course ends for every credit TA pays for.

In the case of officers or civilians, if you leave the service before you complete your service obligation, you must repay the amount the Coast Guard paid for TA.

Big College Scholarship Bucks are Won in Summer

(by Dale Clifton, courtesy of GovCentral)

Driving to the beach. Visiting the park for an enjoyable picnic. Seeing a baseball game. Calling on the local fishing hole. These are great summertime activities. Other pursuits include painting, cutting the grass and washing and waxing the car. We look forward to all of them with great anticipation. When the weather gets warm (no doubt about it), thoughts and actions turn to outdoor events.

One activity that gets forgotten by many college-bound students and their families is the inside expedition of hunting for college scholarships; the quest for money that will significantly reduce or eliminate college debt. This happens for three reasons. First, it is easy to forget because summer is now and scholarships are in the future, the distant future. Second, you don't think you are smart enough to win a scholarship. So, why bother thinking about it now or ever. A third possibility, our family income is too high.

These are all relevant ideas. But, they are all bogus. Here's why. Summer is the best time to begin scholarship activities because there is no rush to get the job done. One can take time to do everything leisurely and thoroughly. Rushing creates anxiety and anxiety creates mistakes. The old maxim slow and sure wins the race also applies to going after scholarships.

Have you made up your mind to use this summer in a profitable way, a way that could eliminate the need for future minimum wage summer jobs? There was a commercial on television a few years back. The slogan went like this: "You can pay me now, or you can pay me later. The choice is up to you." By starting right now, this summer, you can cut your college educational bill by \$10,000, \$20,000 or even \$50,000. Use your computer to investigate and sign up for college scholarship information.

Everything in life is a decision, make the right ones today for your college scholarship success.

Reservists & TA

If you're a Reservist who's using tuition assistance (TA), you may have experienced delays in receiving your TA authorizations because it wasn't sent directly to you at your personal/commercial e-mail address. The information below should help you receive your authorizations in a more timely manner. But first, some background information.

When you fill out your TA application in eTA (the on-line TA application program) you probably enter your personal/commercial e-mail address. Like you, ESOs thought that the address entered here dictated where the authorization was sent. Apparently that's not true. The head of the TA branch at the Coast Guard Institute advises us that "The personal email address in eTA is only for the eTA system generated status emails", for example that your request was approved.

Currently, TA authorizations are sent to ESOs and applicants via an internal Coast Guard Institute computer system originally created to track TA applications. This system is programmed to use the e-mail address listed in DirectAccess as

your "Business" e-mail address. And, apparently, Coast Guard all personnel are now supposed to be using a uscg.mil address as their "Business" e-mail address in DirectAccess.

ALCOAST 406/08 states that all Reservists should be issued a CAC reader so they can check Coast Guard e-mail from home. So you need to do two things to ensure you receive your TA authorizations in a timely manner:

(1) Go into DirectAccess and make sure the e-mail address listed as your "Business" address is your official Coast Guard e-mail address. The DirectAccess path to follow is Home > Self Service > Employee > Tasks > Email Addresses.

(2) Make sure you get a CAC reader and install it on your personal computer.

Finally, you may be interested to know that the eTA system is being updated to require all users to log in at eTA to download completed TA authorizations. Once these updates are complete (in the near future) TA authorizations will no longer be sent to you and the ESO by e-mail.

CG Transcript and Degree Plans

The "Coast Guard Education Center" web site, where unofficial transcripts and degree plans from education assessments have been posted for a long time, is no longer in service.

Instead of getting your unofficial transcript and degree plans there, your ESO will receive them and forward them to you. And if you requested an education assessment, degree plans, or both from the Coast Guard Institute before 13 March 2009, and didn't download them at the time, don't despair. Just ask your ESO to request your most recent transcript, degree plans, or both from the Coast Guard Institute using TACCTS.

Currently, the Institute's processing time for new or updated assessments is about 4 to 5 weeks.

If you've received your unofficial transcript and want an official transcript sent to a college, submit a request (form CGI-1564, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1564.pdf>) directly to the Institute via the e-mail address near the bottom of the form.

REMEMBER: You can't get a transcript sent to a school unless you've first requested an education assessment. For more on this process, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step5.asp>.

HS2 & HS1 EOCTs

If you're currently an HS3 or HS2, be aware that to qualify for the May 2010 SWE (deadline: 01 February 2010) you'll have to have passed the EOCT corresponding to the HS2 course (dated October 2008) or the HS1 course (dated September 2008).

To qualify for the November 2009 SWE (deadline: 01 August), you may take either version of the HS2 or HS1 EOCT.

If you plan to take an HS2 or HS1 EOCT before 01 August, make sure your ESO knows which version of the EOCT you want to take. You don't want to take the latest EOCT if you've been studying the previous version of the course and vice versa!!

New DC1 Course

A new DC1 course is now available (see ALCOAST 362/09). If you've already passed an end-of-course test (EOCT) that corresponds to another version of the course, you're exempt from completing the new course and passing the new EOCT. The version of the DC1 EOCT that corresponds to the previous version of the course will become obsolete on 01 October 2009.

To order a copy of the new course, provide your employee ID number to your ESO.

Warning!

Beware of colleges/universities which require you to sign a contract before you can start taking courses. This is a scam to get money out of you and works like this. You sign a bunch of forms thinking nothing of it, request tuition assistance and take a couple of courses, and then decide to take a semester off or get deployed, assuming you can resume taking courses later. Then, a few months later, you receive a bill from your school for a course you've never heard of.

What happens in these cases is that the school has your whole curriculum laid out, corresponding to the contract that was on one of those forms you signed. Unbeknownst to you, the contract specified that you'd be required to take a course every term. But since you didn't know this, you didn't request tuition assistance (or provide TA to the school), and the school's now billing you for the course you were required to but didn't take!

The moral of this tale of woe is that before you sign ANY form the school sends you, read it over carefully. If you're not sure you understand it, get someone else (like your ESO) to look it over. Reputable schools don't require you to commit to taking a fixed number of courses and have easy ways to back out if you need to. Don't get into a situation where you have to let the school know you don't want to take a course to avoid having to pay for it. College shouldn't be like a mail-order book or CD club.

SAR Fundamentals

Since 01 January 2008, the SAR Fundamentals course has been available exclusively on-line on the Coast Guard Virtual Classroom (<http://64.207.134.26/usr/moodle/course/category.php?id=2&perpage=20&page=1>). The end-of-course test, however, is administered by your ESO the same way as any other EOCT.

Yellow Ribbon Provision of the New GI Bill

One of the lesser-known provisions of the new GI Bill is called the Yellow Ribbon program. Its purpose is to help people who want to go to expensive private schools or to attend graduate school.

As you know, the new GI Bill will pay tuition at any college or university up to the maximum undergraduate tuition and fees charged by the most expensive publicly-funded university in each state. The Yellow Ribbon program authorizes the VA to enter into agreements with schools who charge more than the maximum tuition and fees. Under these agreements, the school can contribute up to 50% of the difference between the actual charges and what the GI Bill will cover. For every dollar the school contributes (or waives), the VA will contribute a dollar.

So, let's say you want to attend a private school in Alabama which charges \$353/credit. In Alabama, the maximum tuition payable under the new GI Bill is \$243/credit and the maximum fees payable is \$12,612. This means the difference between the actual tuition and the max payable by the GI Bill is \$110. If your school has signed a Yellow Ribbon agreement to pay half that difference, it will pay (or waive) \$55 of it and the VA will pay \$55. The net result is that you won't have to pay anything for tuition and fees. If the school said it will waive a quarter of the difference, the VA will pay a quarter of the difference leaving you to pick up what the school and VA won't cover.

Harvard University (Harvard College, all of Harvard's graduate and professional schools, and the Harvard Extension School) will be participating in the Yellow Ribbon program. See <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2009/06.04/yellowribbon.html>. And to find out if the school you're interested in is participating, go to the VA's GI Bill web site (http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/YRP/YRP_List.htm).

Last Day to Register

If you're thinking about taking any courses during Atlantic Cape Community College's (ACCC's) second summer session (29JUN-20AUG), be aware that the last day to register in person is 25JUN and to register on-line, by fax, or by mail is 28JUN.

Deadlines for the third session (13JUL-20AUG) are 09JUL in person and 12JUL on-line, by fax, or by mail.

You can find copies of the summer course guide and catalog just inside the main entrance to the Exchange, in the lab waiting area at the Health Services Center, or just outside the door to the Education Center.

Coastline College Students

Starting with the Fall 2009 term, military students at Coastline Community College who register early for courses in the on-line military program will receive a voucher that allows them to purchase their course textbooks for \$50 or less, plus shipping & handling.

Only students who register and pay for their course(s) by the published deadline (see Academic Calendar at <http://military.coastline.edu/general/dates.cfm>) will qualify for this incentive. For complete details, go to <http://military.coastline.edu/> for complete details.

Scholarships for Reservists

The United Services Automobile Association (USAA) is sponsoring six \$1,000 scholarships for enlisted Reservists or dependents of a Reservist. For more information see ALCOAST 322/09 at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp#usaa>.

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 offerings (from regionally-accredited schools) are

Southwestern College in Wichita, Kansas – which has been working with military students for decades – wants you to know that it offers a number of teaching-related degrees, both bachelor's (early childhood education; elementary education) and master's (teaching; curriculum and instruction; special education). Exams for it's 6-week on-line courses don't require a proctor, so you can take them anywhere you have Internet access. For more information, go to <http://southwesterncollegeps.cmail1.com/T/ViewEmail/r/F2E36DFE9D33A6EF/E44FABFD32964E4E6A4D01E12DB8921D>.

California State University, Dominguez Hills – info about an on-line Sport & Fitness Psychology undergraduate certificate program. This certificate consists of five 3-semester credit courses (\$189/credit). For more information, go to <http://www.csudh.edu/sportpsychology/>. This certificate is aimed at coaches, athletes, trainers, fitness instructors, and health professionals. The program is "designed to increase knowledge of this developing field, to enhance employability of participants and to advance the careers of those currently employed in sport and fitness occupations."

Worried About Getting Deployed While Taking College Courses?

If so, consider self-paced courses. These courses have no fixed terms. You can start whenever you want and can usually finish in as little as six weeks, if that suits you. Or, if you need more time, most run for nine months – with extensions of three more months available.

The following schools are just a few of many regionally-accredited colleges and universities which have self-paced degree programs.

- Arizona, University of (<http://www.ceao.arizona.edu/corresp/index.html>)
- Colorado (Boulder), University of (<http://www.colorado.edu/cewww/>)
- Idaho, University of (<http://www.uidaho.edu/isi/index.htm>)

- Indiana University (<http://scs.indiana.edu/unhs/onlinecourses.html>)
- Iowa, University of (<http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/ccp/gis/>)
- Kansas, University of (<http://www.continuinged.ku.edu/is/index.shtml>)
- Louisiana State University (<http://www.is.lsu.edu/>)
- Mississippi State University (<http://www.is.msstate.edu/College/index.html>)
- Missouri, University of (<http://cdis.missouri.edu/>)
- Nebraska (Lincoln), University of (<http://independentstudy.unl.edu/military/index.shtml>)
- North Carolina, University of (<http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/catalog/index.htm>)
- North Dakota, University of (<http://www.conted.und.edu/correspondence/>)
- Northern Iowa, University of (<http://www.uni.edu/continuinged/gis>)
- Oklahoma, University of (<http://isd.ou.edu/>)
- Ohio University (<http://www.ohiou.edu/independent/>)
- Tennessee (Knoxville), University of (<http://anywhere.tennessee.edu/is/>)
- Weber State University (<http://departments.weber.edu/CE/dl/default.asp>)
- Wisconsin (Madison), University of (<http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/indlearn/>)

You can start courses in all these programs at any time – there are no fixed deadlines for registering, completing lessons, taking tests, or even finishing a course. Needless to say, courses from these programs are especially advantageous if your schedule is unpredictable.

An added benefit of these programs is that in many cases tuition is lower than the maximum per-credit tuition covered by tuition assistance. (The lower the tuition, the more courses per year you can take.)

Passing Score for New DC2 EOCT

DC3s, note that the passing score on the latest DC2 end-of-course test is 80, rather than 76. Until 01 August, you can take either of the two DC2 EOCTs (editions 1 or 2). On and after 01 August, you can only take edition 2.

If you're using the edition 1 course, you should only take the edition 1 test since some information you'll find on the test is included in edition 1 of the course but not in edition 2. Edition 2 reflects the current EPQs and current policy and procedures. So you shouldn't take the edition 1 EOCT if you're studying the edition 2 course.

Foreign Language Tests

If you're thinking about taking a Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT), there are a few things you should know. For the basic facts, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>.

Also keep in mind that this is NOT an easy test for anyone. A lot of native speakers of non-English languages think that just because they grew up speaking the language in the home they'll do well. This seldom turns out to be the case. Those who do the best either studied the language in college or in an intensive language program and then lived in a country where that language is spoken (e.g., Mormon missionaries) or grew up speaking the language *and* went to school where that was the only language used. Americans who only speak it at home or on the street tend not to do well.

Also, there seems to be a misconception that if you do well on this test you'll automatically get FLPP (foreign language proficiency pay). That's not true. Only if you're filling a billet specified in one of the two ALCOASTs referenced on my DLPT web page (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>) can you receive FLPP.

Reimbursement for Language Software

If you're considering buying one of the numerous computer-based programs to learn a second language, I have good news and not-so-good news. The good news is that Coast Guard Foundation education grants can be used to reimburse you for the cost of the software.

All you need is a receipt and your grant application. NOTE: your receipt must show both the cost and what you paid for; a receipt for \$450 but no indication what it was for is worthless. For more information and an application form, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#cgf>.

The not-so-good news is that reimbursements can take months to get to you. This is because the Coast Guard Foundation (which provides the funds) does not disburse them to the Coast Guard Institute (which administers the program) on a fixed schedule. The Institute can only provide reimbursement checks when there are funds in the grant account and there are no set dates when funds are deposited into the account. Also, there's no guarantee that your grant request will approved, since funds may run out before your request is considered.

So if you can't afford to get the software without knowing you'll be reimbursed, you should probably think twice about buying it.

Coast Guard Foundation and Vander Putten Grants Update

The Coast Guard Institute has received funding for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grant and Vander Putten Education Grant programs. If you have any grant applications pending, you should receive a check in the next week or two. You'll receive an e-mail the day before prior checks are mailed out.

Keep in mind that the funds which make these grants possible are gifts from the Coast Guard Foundation and Mr. Roy Vander Putten. That being the case, the amount of funds given to the grant programs may or may not equal the amount of money requested by applicants like you.

For more information on these grants, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#cgf>.

What Education Benefits are Available to My dependents?

While there are few monetary benefits available to spouses of military personnel through the Coast Guard, many other educational services are available. You can find info about services, programs, and benefits and links to more info at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dependents.asp>.

New SOCCOAST School

Jones International University (JIU) has been accepted as a member of SOCCOAST and its Bachelors of Business Administration degree has been added to the SOCCOAST business administration degree network.

JIU is a regionally-accredited distance learning school. Undergraduate tuition is \$250/credit and graduate tuition is \$447/credit. JIU also offers scholarships to Coast Guard civilians and spouses. These rates apply to the full range of degree programs up to the doctorate level. For more information, go to <http://www.jiu.edu/>.

And for more information about SOCCOAST and how it can help you more quickly complete a degree, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/soccoast.asp>.

SOC Agreements

Are you getting your degree from a SOCCOAST school? If so, and if you've completed six credits, you should ask the school for a SOC agreement. This evaluation of completed and remaining degree requirements serves as a contract between the school and you and remains in effect even after you leave the Coast Guard.

With a SOC agreement in place, the school can change its graduation requirements and you won't have to worry about having to take courses to meet the new requirements.

More Scholarships!

Every year, the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) offers scholarships to United States service members and their spouses who are working towards the completion of higher education degrees. Each award is in the amount of \$500 and may be used for tuition, fees, books and other expenses encountered by the student pursuing educational goals. The application deadline is 01 September.

For more information, go to <http://www.ccmeonline.org/nashville10.aspx?session=scholarships>.

New GI Bill & California

If you're a California resident and thinking about getting an undergraduate or graduate degree at a private school in California or a graduate degree at a UC or CSU campus, you need to be aware of something that may make that difficult.

As you know, the new GI Bill will pay tuition up to those charged for an undergraduate degree by the most expensive publicly-funded college or university in the state. Years ago, California legislators enacted a law that allows residents to boast that all state residents can attend a state college or university tuition free. They did this by defining the money students pay to attend state colleges and universities not as tuition but as a fee.

This seemingly meaningless provision will make it difficult, if not impossible, for many students to attend private schools or to get a graduate degree from a publicly-funded school. This is because the VA's payment rate for tuition for California students is \$0 (since the state says it doesn't charge any tuition for residents).

Legislators and VA reps are trying to figure out a way to resolve this problem without Congress having to get involved. But suffice it to say that if you're thinking of going to school in California, you may be in for a rude awakening. (For more on this, go to <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/05/23/MNKH17PG4R.DTL>.)

Deciding Whether to Switch GI Bill Programs

If you declined to enroll in the MGIB-AD (either long ago when you had the option to switch from VEAP to the MGIB-AD or while you were in boot camp), this is an easy decision. You should absolutely apply for the new GI Bill. You do this via VA form 22-1990 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VA22-1990.pdf>) or the VA's on-line version of the same form (<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>).

You'll be able to use the benefits included in the new GI Bill starting on 01 August either for yourself or (once rules are finalized) transfer all or some of your benefit to a dependent.

If you didn't decline to enroll in the MGIB-AD (and have paid all or some of the twelve monthly \$100 payments) or if you're a Reservist enrolled in the MGIB-SR or REAP, here are some things to consider before making that irrevocable election.

- Will the school I'm interested in waive tuition and fees because I'm a veteran?
- What percentage of new GI Bill benefits am I entitled to?
- How much will I spend on rent and books?
- What's the E-5 BAH rate for the Zip code my school's in?
- How many credits am I going to be taking per term?
- What's the current MGIB-AD monthly rate?
- Will I be eligible for tuition assistance?
- Did I contribute to the Buy-up option?
- How much will each benefit pay?

Use the worksheet LCDR Tim Castle (ISC New Orleans) and I created to roughly calculate your benefits under the new GI Bill, the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, REAP, and tuition assistance (with Top-up). You can find the worksheet at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/GIBillDecisionWorksheet.xls>.

Preparing for CLEP Tests & DSSTs

On-line practice tests for both DSSTs and CLEP tests are available at no charge to military personnel. CLEP tests are available through the Coast Guard Learning Portal (<http://learning.uscg.mil>). Once you've logged in, follow this path: Education > Study Guide for DANTES Exams > Launch then select the test you'd like to take. You'll receive a certificate if you pass a practice exam with a score of 70% or higher.

To find practice DSSTs, go to <http://ibt1.prometric.com/index.asp?ibt=3881494402&>. There you'll have to register (if this is your first time at the site) and then select a test from the list of 37 DSSTs available.

Although ESOs can't require you to take a practice test before taking the real thing, you're strongly encouraged to do so. Taking a practice test help you better prepare for the real thing.

One of the Coast Guard's leadership competencies is stewardship. In a nutshell, this means making sure our resources are not wasted. Every CLEP exam given to a Coast Guard student costs the service an average of \$110, whether you pass or fail it. Right now about 65% of those who take CLEP tests fail them. This translates into a lot of wasted dollars.

Just What are DSSTs?

The DSST program (formerly DANTES Subject Standardized Test program) is an extensive series of examinations in college subjects that are comparable to the final or end-of-course examinations in undergraduate courses, akin to the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). For each of the 37 DSSTs the American Council on Education (ACE) recommends 3 semester hours of credit (some are upper-level credits).

Essentially, DSSTs (like CLEP tests) allow you to obtain college credit without having to take college courses. Quoting from the brochure, "DSST is an effective method to provide your college with evidence of prior training and experience. In fact, the 37 exams funded by DANTES complement other credit by exam programs such as CLEP." For more information, stop by the Education Center or go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>.

Tuition Assistance & Grade Reports

If you're using tuition assistance (TA) to take college courses, remember that you **must** provide the grade report for your courses to the Coast Guard Institute within 60 days of the end of the course. If you don't, you'll receive a series of nastygrams from the Navy (which is the Coast Guard's agent for paying TA to schools) demanding reimbursement for the courses you used TA to pay for.

To avoid this, provide a copy of your grade report (with your full name and SSN on it) to your ESO. Your ESO will then submit it (usually via e-mail) to the Institute. If you're unable to put your SSN on it (e.g., if you print it to a PDF file from your computer screen), provide it to your ESO.

If at all possible (so what the Institute sees is legible), print your on-line grade report to a PDF file. If you're not sure how to do this, here's the process.

- (1) Get the grade report on your computer screen.
- (2) Select "File" and "Print" (or press CTRL and P at the same time)
- (3) Select "Adobe PDF"
- (4) Click on "Preferences"
- (5) Click "Layout" tab
- (6) Select "Landscape"
- (7) Click "OK"
- (8) Click on "Print"
- (9) Click "Save" after deciding where you want to save the file
- (10) Attach the PDF document you just created to an e-mail and send it to me.

And if possible, please include in your e-mail the number of the TA authorization which corresponds to the grade report. The TA authorization number is in the upper right corner of your authorization (CGI_____).

Deploying?

If you know you're going to be deploying for some length of time – whether to the Persian Gulf or somewhere here at home – and want to use tuition assistance (TA) to pay for a college course, submit your TA request to your ESO as soon as possible.

The Coast Guard Institute will accept TA requests up to three months before a course begins. But your ESO may be willing to accept them at any time, and then submit them to the Institute as soon as that three-month window opens.

Don't wait until a few days before you're due to sail to submit your TA request. Even if it comes back quickly, if you don't have Internet connectivity you won't be able to download the TA authorization and may not be able to get it to your school by its deadline. The bottom line is: PLAN AHEAD!

Leaving the Coast Guard?

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

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

If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector (<http://www.fedjobs.gov/>), governmental entities at all levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – provide similar benefits.

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

One more thing: the new campus's classrooms, labs, and library are all state-of-the-art. Even if you're not ready to register for classes right away, you should take the opportunity to visit the campus and look around. The Director of Academic and Student Services has extended a personal invitation to anyone who'd like to use the library to study, for research, or for pleasure reading. It's very quiet, well-lit, and has very comfortable furniture.