

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #266

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### Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
FS2 Katharine Adams SN Keith Edsall	Station Barnegat Light TraCen (Housing)	Substance Abuse (DSST) E-PME-4

Well done, both of you!

And if you've just finished a degree program or have any other noteworthy academic achievement to brag about, please let me know so I can recognize you for it.

### Question of the Week

- Q:** I've applied to attend a Coast Guard-funded grad school program for which I'll be obligated to serve four years after I graduate. I'm also going to transfer my new GI Bill benefits to my dependents and when I do so will incur another four-year service obligation. Do these two obligations run consecutively or concurrently?
- A:** They run concurrently. Here's an example of how that will work. Let's say you transfer your benefits on 02 October 2009. Assuming you're not eligible for retirement before 01 August 2012, your four-year service obligation for transferring the GI Bill benefits would end on 02 October 2013.

Let's say, further, that you got into the grad program and graduated on 20 May 2012. Your four-year service obligation for grad school would end on 20 May 2016. And because the two obligations run concurrently, your service obligation for both things would end on 20 May 2016, *not* on 02 October 2017 (four years after the GI Bill benefit transfer obligation ended).

### Testing in TraCen Admin Building

Education customers in the Cape May area who have visited the TraCen Education Center know it's conveniently located in the Command & Mission Support (aka Admin) building. Of course, this convenience comes at a price: noise. Conversations – even quiet conversations – in the inside hall or the outside walkway are easily heard inside the Education Center. And this noise makes it difficult for those taking tests to concentrate and do their best.

To reduce the noise in the area, we've recently acquired some signs to notify visitors when testing is in progress in hopes they'll stop talking. We have four of those yellow A-frame signs (placed at both ends of the inside hall and the outside walkway) as well as a red-and-green electronic sign above the Education Center door. Both say "QUIET! TESTING IN PROGRESS".

As a sign of respect for your shipmates and their desire to take tests in a quiet environment, please stop talking when you see the yellow signs and the lit red-and-green sign.

## New ME "A" School Applications

Applications for the new ME "A" School are now being accepted. For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/psc/epm/ao/nonrate.asp> and <https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/myquickr/me/welcome>.

## Military Times Edge

The current issue of *Edge*, from the publisher of *Navy Times* is available in the Education Center for anyone who wants a copy. The articles in the current issue are:

- Why some online degrees are better than others
- Find the perfect job: researching, networking, and building your personal brand
- College pitfalls
- Ace the interview with responses to 5 likely job interview questions
- Balancing act: TV host doubles as Reservist
- My great new life: Army vet finds happiness as a personal trainer
- From the Corps to the diamond: former Marine on making it to the majors
- 3-year bachelor's degrees
- Film company solicits scripts
- Business cards
- And more ...

## Powerful New (and Free) Study Aid

If you're not sure you're quite ready for college (part-time or full-time) or if you're trying to improve your ASVAB scores to qualify for an "A" school, you now have a great new tool at your disposal.

Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) diagnoses your "current level of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and math abilities and teaches the concepts and skills needed to increase proficiency in each of these academic areas." Through OASC you have access – via any computer at any time of day – to dozens of lessons and quizzes.

- Pre-tests help you evaluate strengths and weaknesses in each subject area and design customized lessons.
- There are interactive games, lessons, and flashcards as well as practice sets and quizzes.
- There's a post-test to measure end-of-course performance.
- It's self-paced.
- There are different course lengths to fit any schedule and accommodate any time constraints you're under.

In the verbal section are lessons ranging from "Building Your Vocabulary" to "Understanding Difficult Text" to "Understanding the Author's Tone". In the math section are lessons such as "Eliminating Wrong Answers", "Multiplying and Dividing Fractions", and "Percent Increase and Decrease". In addition, there are lessons on "Dealing with Studying Stress", "Wrapping up Your Studying", "Reviewing Math", and "Reviewing Verbal".

And OASC is available to both Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian) and dependents of servicemembers. Check it out at <http://www.petersons.com/dantes/>.

## Considering a Health Services Career?

Are you interested in any of the following health services careers?

- dietetics
- medical engineering
- medical record administration
- physician assistant
- nursing
- pharmacy
- sanitary science
- computer science
- dental hygiene
- medical laboratory technology
- therapy (e.g., occupational, physical, speech-language pathology, or audiology).

If so, you might want to look into the Public Health Service's Junior and Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Programs (JRCOSTEP and SRCOSTEP). These programs offer "two excellent opportunities for students to serve their country while completing their education."

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oprograms.asp#phs>. And if you have questions, you can get them answered during upcoming free conference calls. (To participate, call 866-705-5819 and use the passcode, 1633181.) These conference calls will take place at the following dates and times (all times Eastern):

October 15, 2009: 1500  
October 26, 2009: 1000  
November 17, 2009: Noon  
December 7, 2009: 1300  
December 17, 2009: 1100  
December 21, 2009: 1000  
December 29, 2009: 1500

## Tuition Assistance Requests

When you're submitting a TA request, ALWAYS make sure you enter the actual per-credit tuition amount **not** the maximum TA will pay. Why? There are two reasons. First, ESOs are required to verify that everything you enter on the form is correct. Second, you may want to use Top-up (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-30.asp#topup>) if your tuition is higher than the maximum TA will pay. If you don't enter the actual per-credit tuition amount, you won't be able to use Top-up to get reimbursed for the amount TA doesn't cover.

## Mark Your Calendar for CollegeWeek Live

If you're the parent of a college-bound student or are otherwise interested in getting good information about college, check out CollegeWeekLive (CWL). CWL is a four-day on-line college fair to help prospective students in their college planning by connecting them with colleges in a live, interactive environment. You'll be able to find information from dozens of colleges and universities on things like admissions, financing, admission test preparation, college visits, and finding the college which best fits your son, daughter, or yourself.

And while it's aimed mainly at students, parents and counselors are also welcome. And you can register for free (as well as check out the speakers, their topics, the schedule, and many other things) at <http://www.collegeweeklive.com/>.

The next CWL will be held from Wednesday, 04 November through Saturday, 07 November and it's a really fantastic tool. You can do everything you can do at a physical college fair except physically pick up brochures and shake people's hands. You can ask questions of speakers and school representatives, you can download information, you can even chat with current students at various colleges.

## Other CollegeWeek Live Events

In addition to its virtual college fairs, CollegeWeek live hosts many other types of events ([http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en\\_CA/guest/app-about](http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en_CA/guest/app-about)). For example, it's hosting a Test Prep event on Thursday, 17 September between nNoon and 2200 (eastern time) where you can "attend" any of 20 practice SAT, ACT or TOEFL test sessions. These are no-cost events you can access from your computer.

"Test prep tutors from organizations like ProTesters and Powerscore will be leading the live video sessions with real time Q&A, so make sure to be there. Test experts Gary Gruber, Ira Wolfe, and Lynn O'Shaugnessy and representatives from ACT and CollegeBoard will be there to answer your questions."

And if you're considering early admissions, CollegeWeekLive gives you the ability to research a wide variety of colleges, and text chat live with admissions officials. This makes college admissions easier by eliminating money, time, and travel issues from the college search.

At CollegeWeekLive, you can:

- video chat with students on campuses across the country,
- chat live with admissions reps from hundreds of colleges,
- get admissions questions, answered by the pros in real-time,
- win scholarships and other special promotions just for attending, and
- access hours of on-demand content on crucial admissions topics.

## Still Thinking About Learning Another Language?

(courtesy of Mr. Rob McKee, ESO at Sector San Juan)

Rio Salado College (a SOC school) offers Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Arabic, or Chinese on-line learning using interactive voice recognition software and computer-based exercises all backed by the school's faculty. These courses use Auralog's "Tell Me More" language learning software (Rosetta Stone's main competitor).

Tuition is \$215 per credit (well under the max covered by tuition assistance – TA). The course requires you to buy an interactive computer DVD (\$70), but this is covered by TA. If you don't already have them, you'll want headphones, as well, but they and the \$15 registration fee are the only out-of-pocket costs.

These courses are for college credit, are self-paced, and can be completed in 14 or 8 weeks. (They start at 14 weeks but in your first week, if you wish, you can select to do the 8-week class. Your decision as to the length of the course is irrevocable.) You can use the course software without Internet connection, but must submit assignments and take tests via the Internet.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** These courses are only available for PCs, not for Apple computers. Also, you may not be able to take the course using a Coast Guard workstation.

For more information, go to [http://www.riosalado.edu/programs/general\\_education/Pages/languages.aspx](http://www.riosalado.edu/programs/general_education/Pages/languages.aspx) or contact Ms. Yvonne Lawrence at [yvonne.lawrence@riomail.maricopa.edu](mailto:yvonne.lawrence@riomail.maricopa.edu) or by phone at 480-517-8183 or 800-517-8590.

## Reimbursement for Language Software

If you decide to buy a computer-based program 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 be 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.

## Free SAT- ACT Prep Software for Military Families

The eKnowledge Sponsorship Alliance (ESA) – which includes the DoD and a group of NFL and MLB players – is offering SAT and ACT test prep programs to all military service members and their extended families. You're eligible if you're a servicemember from any branch of the military (regular, Reserve, National Guard), retired, a veteran, or a DoD employee or civilian performing military support and their relatives and dependents.

For more information, go to <http://www.military.com/grad-center/prepare-for-success/free-sat--act-prep-software-for-military-families>.

## Help Shape a College's On-line Degree Offerings

Valley Forge Military College (<http://www.vfmac.edu/index.cfm>) "is developing an online degree program **exclusively** for military personnel, including all active duty, National Guard, Reservists, and veterans of any branch of the Armed Forces." Among the college's distinguished alumni are General Norman Schwarzkopf, Senator Warren Rudman, and the current Chief of Naval Operations (equivalent of our Commandant) Admiral Gary Roughead.

"[T]o build an online program that will meet specific needs across the military community, [the college] is launching a military education survey and will use the data gathered in developing ... degree program options, tuition and academic policy."

If you're interested in getting a degree from an institution that's trying to meet your specific needs, help Valley Forge's meet those needs by participating in its free survey at <http://www.vfmconline.com/>. It should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete. "[Valley Forge wants] to build a program designed **by** those who serve, **for** those who serve."

## ASVAB Do-Overs

If you're trying to qualify for an "A" school or some other Coast Guard program, you may want to improve one or more of your ASVAB scores. Here are some things you should be aware of.

- Coast Guard policy allows you to take any of the individual tests which make up the Armed Forces Classification Test battery (AFCT), which is the in-service version ASVAB. This means you can take as few or as many tests you want during a test session.
- You can take an AFCT 30 days after you took it at MEPS. From then on, you must wait at least six months between testing on the same test. This means that if you took the AFCT "Arithmetic Reasoning" (AR) test after graduating from boot camp, and wanted to take it again, you'd have to wait six months between the two tests. If you took the AR test after graduating from boot camp and wanted to take the Mathematics Knowledge (MK) test, you could take it at any time – you wouldn't have to wait until six months after you took the AR test.
- Each of the DoD services has its own policies for administering AFCTs, but all of them require examinees to take the whole battery – all the tests – at one sitting.
- At the moment, the DoD services are using different versions of the AFCT than the Coast Guard's using. And, in any case, they use different tables from the Coast Guard's to convert your raw scores to scaled scores on the AFCTs.

Because of this, if you take the AFCT battery at a DoD facility, whatever scores you receive may be different from the scores you would have received if you'd taken them through the Coast Guard. And, of course, this means that, as a result, you may not qualify for a given Coast Guard program.

- Because the DoD services and Coast Guard use different conversion tables, Coast Guard personnel are **prohibited** from taking AFCTs at DoD facilities.
- Coast Guard ISCs and Training Centers stock AFCT booklets, answer sheets, instruction booklets, scoring templates, etc. They alone score answer sheets and enter converted scores into DirectAccess. They may, however, lend test booklets and provide answer sheets and instruction booklets to other commands for short periods.

So, contact your ESO – not a DoD facility – if you want to re-take one or more ASVAB/AFCT tests.

## On-line Test Scheduling

Training Center Cape May is trying out an Internet-based program for scheduling tests, officer program interviews, and pretty much anything the imagination can come up with.

So, if you'd like to schedule an EOCT or AQE, you can now go to the reservation web site ([http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/TraCen\\_Cape\\_May/EOCTs](http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/TraCen_Cape_May/EOCTs)).

Other ESOs who want to create a similar testing reservation system (it's free!) should contact me for information.

## 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](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](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.

## 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 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.

## Get It in Writing!

A recent article on [military.com](http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html) by retired Coast Guard Chief Terry Howell (<http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html>) provides extremely good advice about how to avoid making costly mistakes when dealing with the VA about your education benefits.

The advice is equally applicable to dealing with *any* government or corporate bureaucracy, for that matter.

## College Give-Aways

Periodically, the Education Center receives give-away items from colleges that are looking for your business. These include things like pens, mouse pads, notebooks, refrigerator magnets, sewing kits, and the like.

If you'd like to check out what's available and take any we have, please stop by the Education Center and look on the deck just inside the door to your right (under the light switch). You're welcome to anything there.