

TraCen Cape May Education Update #356

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TraCen Cape May ESO on Leave

For planning purposes, I'll be on leave from Monday, 21 November through Thursday, 01 December. The Education Center will be closed during that period.

Congratulations!!

The following personnel in the Cape May area passed Coast Guard Institute end-of-course, AQEs, and other tests since the last update:

Name	Work Site	Test
DC2 Matthew Ruegsegger	TraCen (Seamanship)	DC1*
DC2 Lisa Zammiello	TraCen (Seamanship)	DC1*
HS2 Cheryl Bryce	HSWL FO Cape May	E-PME-6
MK2 Allen Strickland	Station Atlantic City	MST2
YN3 Angelique Limongelli	TraCen (Recruit SPO)	YN2*

* First attempt

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: If I originally signed up for the Montgomery GI Bill when I joined the CG (over 10 years ago), do I need to fill out any forms to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill? And is it too early to start thinking about transferring Post-9/11 Bill benefits to my children (the oldest is 7)?

A: As to your first question, you don't have to do anything to be eligible. The fact that you've served more than 90 days on active duty since 10SEP2001 means you're eligible. To activate the benefit for yourself, you'd fill out a form – and that brings me to your second question.

It's never too early to transfer the benefits since you can always change or revoke the transfer and reclaim the benefit for yourself. One consideration is that the earlier you transfer the benefit, the less effect it will have on your retirement plans. Since you have to serve 4 years after you transfer the benefit, if you do it when you've got 10 years to go until retirement it won't affect you at all. But if you waited to transfer it until you had 22 years in, you'd have to stay until you had served 26 years.

The info about the transfer policy (including the 4-year service obligation) is on my web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33b.asp>. The instructions on how to transfer your benefit is at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp>.

Once you get an e-mail confirmation that the transfer was approved (by the Coast Guard) and a separate confirmation (from the DoD) that the transfer was accomplished, you can sit back and do nothing until your kids are ready to use the benefit. Then they (with your input) need to submit DVA's form 22-1990E form (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VA22-1990E.pdf>), one form per child. Keep in mind that the DVA can take 3-4 months to process those forms, so allow for that.

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

Web Page in the Spotlight

There's 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 **Occupational Certification Programs** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cert.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 **emergency** and **emergent** (definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*). While the two words have similar meanings, they're different enough that they shouldn't be used as if they were synonymous.

Emergency is a noun describing an unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action; an urgent need for assistance or relief ("The wild fires prompted the president to declare a state of emergency").

Emergent is most often used as an adjective. As such it describes something that arises unexpectedly or calls for prompt action. In this usage it's related to *emergency* ("Emergent circumstances prompted the president to mobilize the National Guard."). Another adjectival usage is to describe something that's newly formed or prominent ("The emergent nations of Africa have created an economic union.").

It can also be used as noun to describe something that's emergent ("Malawi was an emergent when it was granted independence by Great Britain in 1964") or specific types of vegetation. A tree that rises above the surrounding forest is called an emergent. For example, a redwood or Sequoia in a grove of lodgepole pines would be an emergent because it's so tall. A plant rooted in shallow water and having most of the vegetative growth above water (e.g., a water lily) is also called an emergent.

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.

ACT at TraCen Cape May

The ACT test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) will be administered at TraCen Cape May on Thursday morning, 10 November 2011.

If you're trying to qualify for a Coast Guard program that requires you to have taken either the ACT or SAT and want to take this test, please let me know ASAP. The first three people to get in touch with me (first come, first served) will get a seat. I usually administer these tests once a quarter.

ACT and the CollegeBoard, through DANTES, authorize ESOs to administer these tests only for uniformed personnel.

ESO's may administer the ACT at any time of the year, but can administer the SAT only between 01 October and 30 June. You can see a comparison of the SAT and ACT at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>.

Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to be admitted to take college courses.

You can read/download *Preparing for the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PreparingACT.pdf>) and *Taking the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/TakingACT.pdf>) for more information about the test.

Tuition Assistance Update

Currently, the Coast Guard Institute is authorized to process tuition assistance (TA) requests for courses beginning in **November and December 2011, and in January 2012**. You can use eTA/WebTA (<https://eta.cnet.navy.mil/>) to apply for a course that begins before the end of January 2012.

Because requests submitted via eTA expire after two weeks if you want to apply for a course that begins later than January 2012 you'll need to use the PDF application form (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_4147.pdf) rather than eTA to submit your TA request. The Coast Guard Institute will keep your PDF request on file and process it as soon as funds become available, in the order in which it was received.

Keep in mind that ESOs may not process TA requests for any course that begins more than three months from today.

Occupational Certification & Apprenticeship Programs

A number of occupational certification programs are available through your ESO. The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP - <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>) is a program that allows regular Coast Guard members to earn apprenticeship certification in any of 125 skills learned through work experience and related technical instruction. All you have to do is document the experience you gain while performing your regular military duties; no after-hours work is required.

You can also get a credential (certification or license) in dozens of different occupational fields (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cert.asp>) through a large number of nationally-recognized certification organizations. Here's a small sampling of the fields in which you can get certified:

- automotive service professional
- dental assistant
- contract manager
- medical technologist
- personal trainer

- human resources specialist
- computer networking professional
- project management
- facilities management.

And if you're eligible for GI Bill benefits, you can likely get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for the cost of each certification or licensing exam.

Interested in a Second Career . . .

. . . as a teacher or IT specialist? . . . in business or one of the health care fields? If so, and if you're thinking of getting a degree, check out Western Governors University (<http://www.wgu.edu/>).

As described in a recent article in *The Washington Monthly* (http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/features/the_college_forprofits_should031640.php), WGU is different from all other colleges and universities in the country in that its degrees are "based on competency rather than time".

By gathering information from employers, industry experts, and academics, Western Governors formulates a detailed, institution- wide sense of what every graduate of a given degree program needs to know. Then they work backward from there, defining what every student who has taken a given course needs to know. As they go, they design assessments—tests—of all those competencies. . . .

Those fixed standards enable a world of variation. At Western Governors, students aren't asked to sit in a class any longer than it takes for them to demonstrate that they have mastered the material. In fact, they aren't asked to sit in a "class" at all. At the beginning of a course, students are given a test called a "pre-assessment." Then they have a conversation with their mentor—a kind of personal coach assigned to each student for the duration of their degree program—to discuss which concepts in the course they already grasp, which they still need to master, and how to go about closing the gap. The students are then offered a broad set of "learning resources"—a drab phrase, sure, but no more so than "crowded lecture hall"—that may include videos, textbooks, online simulations, conversations with a WGU course mentor (an expert in the subject matter who is on call to answer questions), or even tutors in the student's hometown.

If the course material is entirely new to a student, she might make her way through it in eight weeks, or eighteen—or eighty, for that matter. Then again, maybe the student is, say, an ex-pastor who's been selling Nissans in western North Carolina to make ends meet while he earns an MBA in human resources management—and maybe the course is Business Ethics. Ray Shawn McKinnon, the former pastor in question, studied ethics in his early twenties for his bachelor's in ministry and theology, so he nailed the pre-assessment. Given that success, his mentor allowed him to immediately take the final, which he passed. With that, Business Ethics went down on his transcript—and McKinnon moved on to subjects that genuinely terrified him, like math. "If you can prove your competence," McKinnon said, "why pay all of that money to sit through something you already know?"

This might be just the ticket for you if you've already acquired a lot of knowledge in specific subjects which are part of your intended degree program. It even offers scholarships to military personnel and their spouses which can be used in addition to tuition assistance and GI Bill benefits.

Parents of College-Age Children, This is For You!

The September/October issue of *The Washington Monthly* is its annual college rankings issue (http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/college_guide/toc_2011.php). In addition to those rankings are some articles you may find interesting:

- “The End of College Admissions as We Know It”
(http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/features/the_end_of_college_admissions031636.php)
- “How the Other Half Tests”
(http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/features/how_the_other_half_tests031638.php)
- “The College For-Profits Should Fear”
(http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/features/the_college_forprofits_should031640.php)
- “Administrators Ate My Tuition”
(http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/features/administrators_ate_my_tuition031641.php)
- “Is Our Students Earning?”
(http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/special_report/is_our_students_earning031647.php).

Is Distance Learning for You?

Because of its convenience, 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 take the time to read a short article published by the University of Illinois listing the characteristics of successful on-line students (<http://www.ion.illinois.edu/Resources/tutorials/pedagogy/StudentProfile.asp>).

And before you hop on the on-line course bandwagon, spend some time with the University of Georgia’s on-line assessment tool to help you determine if computer-based distance learning is for you. It’s called SORT (Student Online Readiness Tool, <http://www.georgiaonline.org/alt/sort/html/sortlau1.html>) and is based on research that says there are “six main topics closely related to a student’s success in the online learning environment”. These are

- Experience with Technology
- Access to Technology,
- Study Habits
- Lifestyle
- Goals and Purposes
- Learning Preferences.

"Each section of SORT has a brief description followed by a questionnaire. Based on your responses to questions, feedback is provided on your personal readiness profile, along with suggested strategies for success and links to more information."

Check out Navy Knowledge Online

Thanks to Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle, for reminding me about Navy Knowledge Online (NKO). Many Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian, regulars and Reservists) are unaware of the huge amount of useful stuff available through it. NKO is an Internet-accessible portal to information and resources on dozens of topics falling under five broad categories:

- Career Management
- Personal Development
- Leadership
- Learning
- Reference

Under the “Reference” tab, for example, you’ll find links to the Navy’s professional reading program; an Information Literacy Toolkit; language, country, and cultural awareness resources; Tutor.com (where you can link up live with tutors on a huge variety of subjects); and dozens of books (including downloadable audio books), journals, magazines, and newspapers in the e-Library. The only category not of much use to Coast Guard personnel is “Career Management”.

Do yourself a favor and check out Navy Knowledge Online at <https://www.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>. You can access it from a Coast Guard workstation or personal computer.

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.

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:

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.

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.