

TraCen Cape May Education Update #367

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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:

Name	Work Site	Test
GM3 Charles Nieves	TraCen (Armory)	GM2

Well done, PO Nieves!!!

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 – Do I need a degree?

Q: Everyone tells me that I have to get a degree to make a good living in today's world. The problem is, I'm not really interested in most of the courses I'd have to take to get a degree. I want to open my own car repair shop and don't think I need a degree to do that. Am I crazy if I don't get a degree?

A: The short answer is “No, you’re not crazy.” Many people don’t find the prospect of getting a degree appealing. But data does show that on average, the more formal education you have, the more money you’re likely to earn during your working life. See <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/whymore01.asp> and the links you’ll find there.

Still, this doesn’t mean that higher education is necessary to make a good living. (And never discount the value of doing what you like versus doing work you don’t like but which earns you more money.)

Take, for example, skilled electricians. According to the latest figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “In May 2008, median hourly wages of wage and salary electricians were \$22.32. The middle 50 percent earned between \$17.00 and \$29.88. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$13.54, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$38.18.” (For a rough idea of what that translates into annually, multiply by two thousand. That is, if you earn \$30/hour, you’re earning approximately \$60,000 per year.)

“Median hourly wages of automotive service technicians and mechanics, including commission, were \$16.88 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$12.44 and \$22.64 per hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$9.56, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$28.71 per hour.”

As you pointed out, 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.

If you want to start your own business, you can take individual business-related courses at a community college (e.g., marketing or bookkeeping). Or you can even find many such courses free on-line. The “Training & Education” tab on the CGPortal (<https://cgportal.uscg.mil/delivery/Satellite/trained>) gives you access to Skillport, which has dozens of business-related courses. You can also find free college business courses and courses from other sources as well (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#knowledge>).

And for info on starting a small business, go <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>.

The bottom line is that you first need to find out if a degree is something you need to reach your goal. But don’t jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

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 **Small Business Resources** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

A number of people have asked that I expand my weekly “Frequently-Confused/Misused Words” entry to cover grammar and usage questions other than confused/misused words as well. This week, **different than** vs. **different from**. (This is from <http://litreactor.com/columns/20-common-grammar-mistakes-that-almost-everyone-gets-wrong>.)

This is a tough one. Words like “rather” and “faster” are comparative adjectives, and are used to show comparison with the preposition “than,” (e.g., greater than, less than, faster than, rather than). The adjective “different” is used to draw distinction. So, when “different” is followed by a preposition, it should be “from,” similar to “separate from,” “distinct from,” or “away from.” (“My living situation in New York was different from home.”)

There are rare cases where “different than” is appropriate, if “than” operates as a conjunction. (“Development is different in New York than in Los Angeles.”)

When in doubt, use “different from.”

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.

MilitaryTimesEDGE and G.I. Jobs Magazines

Drop by the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113) to pick up the latest or a back issue of EDGE (published by the company that publishes *Navy Times*) and/or G.I. Jobs magazine. They're in the display rack to your right as you walk in.

Studying for the Servicewide Exam?

If you're studying for the servicewide exam (SWE), an end-of-course test (EOCT), or an E-PME AQE you may be tempted to use one of the iPhone or Android applications available which is advertised as covering what you need to know for the test. **BEWARE!!!** Those reviewed by one of our full-time ESOs are not complete. That is, they don't include all the material that's in the rating course or the E-PME Study Guide.

Check Out a Career in the Health Information Technology Field

Estimates from government agencies and independent studies indicate a need for 50,000 to 80,000 more health IT workers so health care facilities can implement and maintain electronic health records (EHRs) and meet meaningful use requirements.

Included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 were grants to community colleges to be used to train “health information technology professionals”: people qualified to support information exchange among health care providers and public health authorities and to redesign of workflows within the health care settings to gain the quality and efficiency benefits of EHRs.

If you're interested in finding out more about opportunities these grants create, information on colleges providing this training, their admission criteria, their tuition structures, etc. check out the fact sheet at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/HIT.pdf> and one of the participating consortium's web sites at <http://hitregiond.pittcc.edu/index.html>.

Careers in High Energy

If you're looking for a recession-proof career, you might consider companies that generate and distribute energy. Nearly 40% of current workers in utility companies are expected to retire or leave within the next five years. Openings include security officer positions, which you might be hired for without specialized training (depending on your current rate), engineers, line workers, plant operators, pipe fitters, welders, and others.

The Center for Energy Workforce Development is a non-profit consortium of electrical, natural gas, and nuclear utilities and their associations formed to help utilities develop solutions to the coming workforce shortage in the utility industry. Check out its Troops to Energy Jobs initiative at <http://www.cewd.org/index.asp>, the bottom of the page, and <http://engineers.getintoenergy.com/index.php>.

And once you've read a bit about the types of work that's likely to become available, check out the Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>) to find out more about

- the nature of the work,
- required training,

- other qualifications,
- advancement opportunities,
- current and future employment prospects,
- earnings,
- related occupations,
- sources of additional information.

Is an Emergency Management Career for You?

Read the article by Jessica Lawson from MilitaryTimesEDGE magazine (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/career017.pdf>).

NavRules & Deck Watch Officer Tests

When studying for a Deck Watch Officer test (either the closed-book DWINTO or open-book DWINTR), be aware that the official book, *Navigation Rules: International – Inland* (COMDTINST M16672.2D) is correct only through 25 March 1999. The tests cover what's in the book *and* all changes made to it since 1999.

You can find the current corrections by going to the Coast Guard Navigation Center's web site (<http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/>) and following this path: Nav Rules > COMDTNST M16672.2D - Navigation Rules.

Links to both a complete corrected version and the individual changed pages are in the paragraph below the list of bullets at the top of the page.

New Enlisted Rating Advancement Training System (ERATS)

ALCOAST 033/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST033-11.pdf>) followed by 577/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST577-11.pdf>) described the new system which will replace the training system currently used by enlisted personnel to advance (EPQs, PQGs, and EOCTs). A presentation recently produced by ForceCom (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ERATS_Intro.pdf) provides a really good introduction to how the new system is structured and will work.

The new system is currently in effect for MSTs and the message implementing it for members of the OS rate was just published (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST046-12.pdf>).

Top Colleges for Veterans

Military Times Edge (published by the same company that publishes *Navy Times*) recently created a list of colleges and universities which takes into account criteria 500 student-veterans felt were the most important to them. You can find the list at <http://militarytimesedge.com/projects/best-for-veterans/best-colleges-for-veterans/2011/>.

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 **Virginia Tech** announcing a new on-line master's program in ocean engineering. Areas of study within this program are

- Hydrodynamics
- Structures
- Propulsion
- Vehicle dynamics
- Marine engineering

Virginia residents pay \$488/credit for tuition; non-residents pay \$957.75/credit. For more information, go to http://www.aoe.iddl.vt.edu/Ocean_Courses.html.

ACT at TraGen Cape May

The ACT test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) will be administered on **Thursday, 22 March at 0730**.

If you're trying to qualify for a Coast Guard program that requires you to have taken the ACT and want to take it here, please let me know ASAP. There are three seats still available for the ACT. They will be reserved on a first come, first served. I usually administer these tests once a quarter.

- ACT, through DANTES, authorizes ESOs to administer these tests only for uniformed personnel.
- ESOs may administer the ACT at any time of the year.
- Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to take college courses.
- In general, military personnel are authorized to take one ACT (or SAT) paid for by DANTES. So if you want to take both, one would be free and you'd have to pay for the other. The ACT costs \$34; the SAT costs \$49.

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.

May Servicewide Exams

The next servicewide exams (SWEs) will be held on Tuesday, 01 May (for advancement to E-5 and E-7) and on Thursday, 03 May (for advancement to E-6, E-8, and E-9).

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, make sure you check **everything** on it carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC. **You must do this before 01 April.**

- 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>.

SAT or ACT: Which is Better for Me?

The SAT Reasoning test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sat.asp>) and the ACT (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) emphasize different things, so check them both out before deciding which you want to take. You can find a comparison at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>.

Military personnel (both regular and Reserve) may take the SAT Reasoning Test and ACT at DANTEs military test sites throughout the country. There is no charge for the first test, but you must pay for all subsequent tests. INCONUS DANTEs military test sites are not allowed to offer either test to anyone but uniformed military personnel.

ESOs who are DANTEs Test Control Officers (TCOs) may obtain and administer the ACT at their units at any time. Be aware, however, that the ACT must be ordered at least 30 days before the scheduled test date. To make sure your ESO actually has the test before your scheduled test date request it at least five weeks before the date you want to take it.

The SAT Reasoning Test is slightly different. Although your TCO will receive it within about two weeks after ordering it, TCOs may only administer the test from 01 October through 30 June each year.

Both the ACT and SAT must be returned within 45 days of the date they’re sent to the TCO (not the date they arrive).

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

Free SAT & ACT Preparation Software

eKnowledge Corporation, MLB, the NFL, and other sponsors have teamed up to provide free SAT and ACT preparation software to servicemembers and their families. If you received the software last year, you’ll need to get a free upgrade. While the software is free (retail price \$200), you must pay \$13.84, which covers the cost of technical and customer support, registration, licensure, processing, handling, and worldwide shipping.

Parents of high school students applying for college next year should get this software early, so their children can begin preparing ASAP.

To order, go to www.eknowledge.com/usa or call 951-256-4076. You will need to provide a “Sponsorship Code”. E-mail me if you’d like it and I’ll send it to you. However, once you get the code **PLEASE** don’t share it with anyone – even other military personnel or dependents.

Recording Professional Development Achievements

If you want an advanced degree entered into DirectAccess, fill out form PPC-2030 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PPC2030.pdf>), attach copies of your diploma and the corresponding transcript, and take it to your SPO or other YN who enters data into DirectAccess. This applies to enlisted personnel and officers.

Your SPO or YN can also enter Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and other standardized test scores into DirectAccess. To send such scores directly to PSC-psd-mr – which is highly recommended – follow the instructions outlined on page 19 of the *Officer Postgraduate and Advanced Education Application Process Guide* (http://www.uscg.mil/opm/Opm1/Opm1docs/PG/AY12Docs/AY12_PG-AdvEd_Process_Guide.pdf).

And many junior officers are unaware of the procedures for ensuring promotion boards and detailers know about higher education they've completed and their extracurricular career development activities. If this is you, fill out form CG-4082 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4082.pdf>) and e-mail it (with scanned copies – front and back – of your official transcript or a certified copy of it) to the appropriate person at the Personnel Service Center Military Records Branch (PSC-psd-mr, formerly known as adm-3) (<http://www.uscg.mil/psc/adm/adm3/contact.asp>).

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>.

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.

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 a 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 application 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.**

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/sitest.asp>.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (0730): 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.

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.