

TraCen Cape May Education Update #374

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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
BM2 Joseph Stoltz	TraCen (Seamanship)	SAR Fundamentals*

* First attempt

Congratulations are also in order for ME2 Fred Chase who just completed a bachelor’s degree in military management and program acquisition with a concentration in leadership at American Military University.

Well done, POs Stoltz and Chase!!!

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 – How do I improve my ASVAB VE score?

Q: One of the ASVAB scores I have to improve to qualify for “A” school is the VE. How do I do that?

A: First of all, be aware that there is no VE test. Your ASVAB VE score is calculated by adding the raw scores (i.e., number of questions correct) on the PC (Paragraph Comprehension) and WK (Word Knowledge) tests and then using a conversion table to determine your VE score. For the most part, the Coast Guard allows people to re-take the

individual tests to improve their scores. But the tests which make up the VE score are an exception: you have to take both of the PC and WK tests and have to take them at the same sitting.

Also keep in mind that raising your VE score may be very difficult, depending on what your current PC and WK scores are. For example, say you got all but one or two questions right on the PC test. Unless you can be sure to get those questions you missed right, you may lower your VE score. Why? Because the version of the ASVAB you took as a civilian at a MEPS is different from the one you can take after entering the Coast Guard, and it's scored differently. A VE score of 53 on the MEPS-administered ASVAB may be only 50 on the in-service version of the ASVAB (called the AFCT).

Also keep in mind that because the WK is a vocabulary test, unless you were ill or sleep-deprived when you took the MEPS ASVAB, it's likely that the score you received is a pretty good representation of your vocabulary. Improving your score on the WK test will be extremely difficult unless you've become an avid reader or memorized a dictionary since you took the ASVAB.

Remember, too, that these are extremely high-stakes tests. ***Whatever score you receive on a re-test becomes your new official score – even if it's lower than your previous score. And you have to wait six months to take the same test again.***

Finally, know that you almost certainly don't *have* to improve your VE score to qualify for a given "A" school. That is, there are likely to be other options for raising your composite score to qualify for any "A" school since each composite score is made up of more than one test score.

To re-take an ASVAB (AFCT) test, contact your ESO.

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 ***Residency Requirements for In-State Tuition*** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/tuition.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, ***advice*** and ***advise***. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

The word ***advice*** is a noun meaning a recommendation regarding a decision or course of conduct. Examples: "She gave her son advice on how to invest his money" and "The president makes appointments with the advice and consent of the Senate."

Advise is a verb meaning to provide advice. Examples: "She advised her son on how to invest his money" and "My boss tried to advise me about how to proceed, but I didn't listen."

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.

Two Seats Left for SAT at TraCen Cape May

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 one of these tests, please let me know ASAP. I usually administer these tests about once a quarter.

The SAT Reasoning Test (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sat.asp>) will be administered at TraCen Cape May on **Thursday, 26 April starting at 0730**. There are two seats available for it. They will be reserved on a first come, first served.

ACT and the CollegeBoard, through DANTES, authorize DANTES Test Control Officers (ESOs who've been specifically designated) to administer these tests only for uniformed personnel. In general, military personnel are authorized to take one ACT **or** one 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.

ESOs 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 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. Somewhat comparable information is available on the SAT web site (<http://sat.collegeboard.org/home>).

Do **not** register on-line for the SAT if you want to take it through your DANTES TCO.

“Test Drive” a College Class

From 0900 to 1900 on Tuesday, 10 April, the Cape May Court House campus of Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) will be hosting free sample college classes. If you've thought about attending college, but were not sure what to expect or even a bit timid about going back to school, this is your chance to see if college is for you. Among the subjects you can sample classes in are:

- Principles of Sociology
- Introduction to Logic
- General Psychology
- History of the Western World
- Principles of Marketing
- Reading/Writing
- Creative Writing
- Anatomy and Physiology

You can also take a tour of the campus, meet faculty, and learn more about ACCC. For more information and to reserve a seat in one or more sample classes (first come, first served), go to <http://www.atlantic.edu/admission/test-drive/> or call 609-343-4907. And to see or download a flyer, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/20120410-ACCC.pdf>.

College Success Tips for Adult Learners

If you're taking college courses or thinking about doing so, please stop by the Education Center (Mission Support/Admin Building, Room 113) to get a copy of *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*. Here are a few chapter titles:

- Top 10 Reasons to Continue Your Education
- Selecting the Right Distance Learning Program

- Credit by Examination
- Choosing Classes
- Study Tactics
- How to Manage Time Well
- Writing a Research Paper

Even if you've been taking college courses for awhile, I think you'll find something useful in it.

Another ACT/SAT Prep Resource

If you're preparing for to take the ACT or the SAT Reasoning test, check out March 2 Success (<https://www.march2success.com/>), a resource provided by the Army. It includes ACT and SAT practice tests and flash cards. And it's free.

Don't Forget the Navy

Throughout the Coast Guard's history, it has shamelessly borrowed from the DoD services and used their resources whenever possible. An example is the previous item. But although only a few Army resources are available to us, the Navy has made a huge number available through N@vy Knowledge Online (<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>) or NKO.

Once you've registered, you'll have free access to hundreds of web pages on subjects in the following categories:

- Personal Development: Health & Wellness, Personal Financial Management, Family Readiness
- Leadership
- Learning: College & Credentialing, Language Resources
- Reference: e-Library

In the e-Library alone are an amazing number of e-books and audio books on huge variety of subjects, as noted in the DANTES Information Bulletin:

- Professional
- General (e.g., health, legal, computers, education)
- Journals and magazines
- Children & young adults
- Student resources
- Research & reference libraries

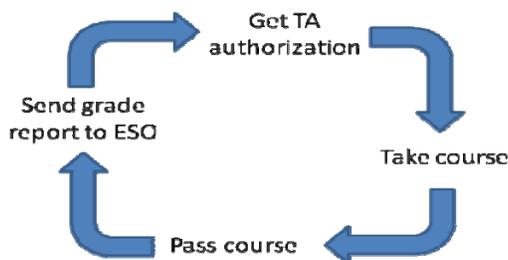
These are all free, too. And since you have to create an NKO account to apply for tuition assistance, you should check out what's available once you've created that account.

eTA Tips

If you've use the Navy's on-line tuition assistance application program in the past or are going to be applying for TA for the first time, there are a few things to keep in mind as you fill out the application.

- **If you've never completely read and digested the "Application Agreement Acceptance" page, please do so before automatically clicking the "I Accept" button at the bottom.** If you don't understand what's written there, you may be in for a rude shock when one of the conditions for using TA comes back to haunt you. For example, you could be required to pay for a course you didn't even take.

- **If you enter your personal (non-Coast Guard) e-mail address in your application, you may not get the e-mail from the Navy telling you your authorization is ready to download.**
- **The fact that you don't get an e-mail from the Navy doesn't mean your authorization hasn't been approved or isn't ready to download.** Before contacting your ESO, go to the "Existing Applications" page of eTA, scroll down and find the listing for the TA application you're waiting to hear about. If it says "Authorized" in the right-hand column, your authorization's ready and you can download it. Go to the left-hand column and click on "View", then right click on "Print Document" and select "Save As" and save it to your computer so you can print out a copy for your school and any copies in the future you might need. (If you left click on it, you'll be able to print it out, but you won't be able to get another copy in the future if you need it.)
- **Don't forget to send your grade report to your ESO when you finish a course.** A lot of people assume that all they have to do is request TA and take the course. These are usually people who never read the "Application Agreement Acceptance" page of eTA (see first bullet above). There's a closed-loop system in place for using TA:



- If you receive an authorization for a course but end up not taking it and forget to let your ESO know, you'll be required to pay for the course (until you get the authorization cancelled)
- If you don't pass a course TA paid for, you'll be required to repay the TA.
- If you don't send a grade report to your ESO, the Navy won't know you passed the course and you'll be required to repay the TA.
- If you don't provide your grade report within 42 days after your school term ends, you'll be locked out of eTA and won't be able to use TA until you provide the grade report.

Need a Quiet, Distraction-Free Place to Study for the Servicewide Exam?

The Director of Academic and Student Services at Atlantic Cape Community College in Cape May Court House has extended an offer to Coast Guard personnel (even if you're not a student there) to use its library to study (or for research or pleasure reading). It's very quiet, well-lit, and has very comfortable furniture.

Officer Application Process Tips

While cleaning up my desk, I came across a page of notes I took somewhere I can't remember (from a message? a presentation?) about the officer application process. I think they're very useful and have put a link to them on my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/OAPPtips.pdf>). They'll also be incorporated into the next version of my application handbook.

Recent CGA Grads & the New GI Bill

When the new GI Bill was enacted in June 2008, Congress provided that for those who graduated from the DoD service academies the time spent fulfilling their post-graduation service requirement (currently the five years immediately following graduation) could not be counted as active duty time for purposes of establishing eligibility for benefits under the new GI

Bill. They would become eligible for education benefits at the 100% level the day after the eighth anniversary of their graduation.

For reasons we can only speculate about, this provision did not apply to Coast Guard Academy graduates. That meant that immediately after graduation they would begin accruing active duty service time which would count for purposes of establishing eligible for benefits under the new GI Bill. They would become eligible for education benefits at the 100% level the day after the third anniversary of their graduation.

One of the provisions of the so-called “Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010” (signed by the president on 04 January 2011) made the provision described above for DoD service academy graduates applicable to Coast Guard Academy graduates as well.

However, the provision applies only to cadets who enter the academy on and after 04 January 2011. Put another way, this change in the law applies only to members of the Coast Guard Academy class of 2015 and those following it.

EXAMPLE 1: A cadet or midshipman who graduated from one of the DoD academies in May 2003 and has remained on active duty since then became eligible for benefits under the new GI Bill at the 100% level in May 2011 (i.e., after serving his five-year service obligation and 36 months of additional active duty service). This is the case for all DoD academy graduates now and in the future.

EXAMPLE 2: A cadet who graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in May 2003 and has remained on active duty since then became eligible for benefits under the new GI Bill at the 100% level in May 2006 (i.e., after 36 months of active duty service after graduation). This will be the case for all CGA graduates up through the class of 2014.

EXAMPLE 3: A Coast Guard Academy cadet who graduates in May 2015 will become eligible for new GI Bill benefits at the 100% level in May 2023 (assuming she remains on active duty that whole time) – i.e., after her five-year service obligation and 36 months of additional active duty service.

If you're a CGA grad who applied for benefits under the new GI Bill (either via the on-line VONAPP (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/apply-for-benefits/application>) or VA form 22-1990 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/doc/VA22-1990.pdf>)) and were rejected, please contact Mr. Reidus Stokes (reidus.stokes@uscg.mil) so he can review your situation.

Spouse Education Grant

From **01 April until 01 June 2012**, the Coast Guard Foundation will accept applications for a needs-based education grant for spouses of Coast Guard enlisted personnel in pay grades E-3 through E-6. The grant (\$500) is intended to help the spouses of personnel on active duty in the regular Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Applicants need only show enrollment in an education program or proof of a course completion (i.e., they can apply for the grant even before a course begins). Types of courses for which reimbursement is available include those offered by vocational and certification programs, as well as those offered at colleges and universities. Download the application form: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1570.pdf.

Applicants will not need to provide receipts for expenses, but they will need to itemize expenses. They will also need to list some basic financial information. Transportation and child care expenses can be listed as legitimate expenses for the grant. Also part of the application process is an essay (no longer than 500 words) which addresses what it means to the applicant to be a Coast Guard spouse and describing the difference education has made to the applicant's life and the lives of the applicant's family members.

In June, a selection committee will convene to select grantees. The Coast Guard Institute expects as many as 40 spouses will receive assistance. This grant will be a somewhat different from the other grants administered by the Coast Guard Institute in that the Institute will handle the paperwork and selection processes while the Coast Guard Foundation will actually write the checks.

Job Fair in Delaware

On **Saturday, 21 April 2012** from 0900 to 1300, Wilmington University will host Operation Success at its main campus in New Castle, Delaware. Operation Success is a free job fair and community outreach event for servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Attendees will have the opportunity to attend several workshops on such topics as:

- on-line job search strategies,
- résumé writing,
- budgeting techniques,
- PTSD,
- transition assistance,
- military training to college credit,
- how to start a small business,
- Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits.

You can also meet with representatives from local colleges, universities, and support agencies.

For more information and to register, go to <http://www.OpSuccess.com>.

Student Loan Consolidation

If you entered the Coast Guard with more than one student loan and are now paying them off, you might want to consider consolidating them so you only have one payment to make each month. Don't just jump at the first loan consolidation company you see an ad for, however. First, check out the Department of Education's web site on student loan consolidation: <https://loanconsolidation.ed.gov/AppEntry/apply-online/appindex.jsp>. And **please** start by reading the "Important Message" at the top of that page, concerning "a short term consolidation opportunity" available until 30 June 2012.

Student Loan Forgiveness

Starting within the next few years, you may qualify for forgiveness of the remaining balance due on your eligible federal student loans after you have made 120 payments on loans under certain repayment plans while employed full time by certain public service employers. Only non-defaulted loans made under the William D. Ford Direct Loan ProgramSM are eligible for loan forgiveness. The Direct Loan Program includes (but is not limited to) the following types of loans:

- Federal Direct Stafford Loans (Direct Subsidized Loans)
- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loans (Direct Unsubsidized Loans)
- Federal Direct PLUS Loans (Direct PLUS Loans, for parents and graduate or professional students)
- Federal Direct Consolidation Loans (Direct Consolidation Loans)

"Public service", for purposes of this program, includes employment by any federal, state, local, or tribal government entity (including the military, public schools and colleges, public child and family services agencies, and special governmental districts).

"Since borrowers must make 120 monthly payments on their eligible federal student loans beginning after October 1, 2007 before they qualify for the loan forgiveness, the first cancellations of loan balances will not be granted until October 2017." For more information about this program, go to the Department of Education's web site at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/PSF.jsp>.

Scholarships

Below are descriptions of a number of scholarships open to military personnel, their dependents, or both. **Be aware, however, that these are just a few of thousands of scholarships you or your dependents may be eligible for.** They're the low-hanging fruit, the ones most often publicized and (as a result) the ones that have the most applicants. If you really want some serious money from scholarships, you'll apply to all you're eligible for – especially those not widely known. For more about scholarships (including how to find and apply for them in a systematic manner), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>.

Fleet Reserve Association Education Foundation

The FRA Education Foundation offers many different scholarships to eligible full-time students who are U.S. citizens attending accredited colleges and universities in the United States. For more information, go to <http://www.fra.org/foundation>. The deadline for submitting applications is **15 April 2012**.

Coast Guard Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Association

Applications are now being accepted for the Art and Eleanor Colona Scholarship Grant, sponsored by the Coast Guard Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Associations (CWOA). Children of regular Coast Guard personnel, Reservists on active duty, and retirees may apply for the \$4,000 scholarship (to be paid in four installments of \$1,000 per year). The application deadline is **01 June 2012**. For more information, go to see ALCOAST 136/12 at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST136-12.pdf>.

Waldorf College

(courtesy of Mr. Marc Fagenbaum, full-time ESO at Base Miami)

To recognize the sacrifices made by the family members of military servicemembers and public safety personnel (firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs & dispatchers) Waldorf College in Iowa will award eight scholarships for on-line students and two for residential students in 2012 through the Hero Behind the Hero Scholarship Program.

Two scholarships (one for the military spouse or dependent and one for the firefighters/law enforcement officer spouse or dependent) will be presented on the award dates listed. Applicants not selected may continue to apply for a maximum of five scholarship award dates.

Scholarship Application Periods

Scholarship Award Dates

01 JAN 2012 – 30 APR 2012	May 2012 (residential)
01 FEB 2012 – 31 MAR 2012	April 2012 (on-line)
01 APR 2012 – 03 MAY 2012	June 2012 (on-line)
01 JUN 2012 – 31 JUL 2012	August 2012 (on-line)
01 AUG 2012 – 30 SEP 2012	October 2012 (on-line)
01 OCT 2012 – 30 NOV 2012	December 2012 (on-line)

Go to <http://www.waldorf.edu/Online/Tuition---Financing/Scholarships/Hero-Behind-the-Hero> for more information and a link to an on-line application. Or you can e-mail hero@waldorf.edu or call 877-267-2157.

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 whether you need a degree to enter the field you want to work in,
- if a degree will be helpful, 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 to the Coast Guard Institute for an education assessment and to have official transcripts of your assessment sent to colleges you've identified, and
- pick your first course.

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

Career & Education Planning Tools

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

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

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (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 Wednesdays, 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.

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.