

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #375

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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:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Work Site</b>	<b>Test</b>
HS2 Colleen Walter	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1*

\* First attempt

Well done, PO Walter!!!

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 can I get college credits for my Coast Guard service?

**Q:** I've heard that I can earn college credits for my Coast Guard service and can reduce the number of courses I need to take in college by having those credits sent to my college. How do I do that?

**A:** First, be aware that every college in the country decides for itself if it will accept credits earned elsewhere and, if it does, which degree and major requirements they'll apply to. So although you may have earned 100 credits from Coast Guard or other military service, your college may decide not to accept any of them toward the major and degree you're pursuing.

That said, you should get a transcript of service-related college credits before you start working on a degree. (Before you can use Coast Guard tuition assistance, you have to request a transcript unless you've already got a bachelor's degree or if have requested one in the last four years.) The process is very simple. Just download and fill out the

Coast Guard Institute's "Request for Transcript" form ([http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG\\_Form\\_1561.pdf](http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1561.pdf)) and e-mail it to your ESO. You can request an

- assessment of your service and service-related schools,
- update of a previous assessment, or
- official transcript.

If you request an assessment for the first time or an update of an assessment you had done sometime in the past, you'll receive an unofficial transcript by e-mail. Official transcripts are only mailed to colleges and universities (and, in some cases, to ESOs). They include the same information as the unofficial transcript but are printed on fancy watermarked paper and their envelopes are specially sealed to prevent tampering. For more information about transcripts, go to [http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/active\\_duty/go\\_to\\_college/official\\_transcript.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/official_transcript.asp).

Be sure to read the instructions on the form before filling it out – especially the instructions to section 3. It's not often that you need to enter any course information in section 3 since most of your courses and all your advancements are recorded in DirectAccess, where those conducting the assessment get your credit-related information from.

The Institute's processing time is short: you'll probably get your unofficial copy of the transcript within a week or less.

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](mailto: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 **Getting Started (with college)** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.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, **its** and **it's**. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

The word *its* is a possessive noun like *his*, *your*, *my*, etc.: "Its wheels fell off" and "The tree lost its leaves."

The word *it's* is a contraction of *it is* and, like all contractions, requires an apostrophe: "It's time to go" and "It's nice to have met you."

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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Two Seats Left for 24APR 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>.

### Deadline this Sunday for Fleet Reserve Association Scholarship Applications

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**.

### CLEP (and Other) DANTEs-Sponsored Tests for College Credit

Most military personnel have heard of CLEP tests. And, unfortunately, most labor under the myth that CLEP tests (along with DSSTs and ECEs) are easy ways to get college credit. The phrase “I want to CLEP out of [insert your best subject here]” is on the lips of practically everyone who visits a Coast Guard education center. They've been led to believe that all they have to do is walk into an exam room, take a test, and earn college credit.

In many cases taking one of these tests could be a great way to earn college credit and lessen the number of courses you have to take to earn a degree. But be aware that what's good for some people may not be good for you and vice versa. That is, earning credit by taking exams is not for everyone and, for most, is not easy.

Remember, these aren't courses, they're just tests; you have to locate study materials that work for you and you have to teach yourself the subject. Because there are no fixed study deadlines or milestones, many people find preparing adequately for these tests difficult.

On the other hand, if you're a self-starter, good at budgeting your time, and studying effectively on your own, these tests are a great way to earn college credit without having to take college courses.

Keep in mind that every college in the US decides for itself whether and how much credit it will accept for credits earned from these tests. Make sure you contact the school you want to earn your degree from to see if it will accept scores from the tests you're thinking of taking.

And for more information about the tests (including links to study materials), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/tests.asp>.

## Watch Out for Diploma Mills Masquerading as Legitimate Colleges

(courtesy of Troy Blappert, full-time ESO at Base Seattle)

Before responding to an ad or other hype describing how easy it is to get a college degree, check out a web site that will help you figure out if the school you're interested in is a legitimate. "Phony online colleges crank out fake diplomas and phony college degrees at a dizzying pace," one page of the web site's *Diploma Mill Police* page states (<http://www.geteducated.com/diploma-mill-police>).

"Diploma Mills almost always promise a fast college degree based on life experience. GetEducated's online education researchers have prepared these Top 10 Signs of an Online College Degree Mill to help online students protect themselves from this popular online education scam."

In addition to a database of degree/diploma mills, the site provides a way for you to report buy-a-degree scams and has short articles that describe how to recognize a degree/diploma mill, where most are located, whether saying you got your degree on-line is a good idea, a list of fake accrediting agencies, the pros and cons of "life experience on-line degrees", and much more. And, to quote Mr. Blappert, "It also highlights schools that are nationally accredited as opposed to regionally, and it explains the difference and potential drawbacks."

## 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:

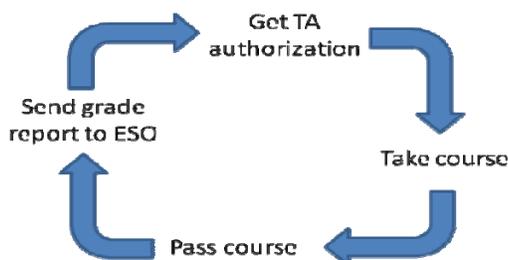
- Top 10 Reasons to Continue Your Education
- Selecting the Right Distance Learning Program
- Credit by Examination
- Choosing Classes
- Study Tactics
- How to Manage Time Well
- Writing a Research Paper

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

## 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.

## 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](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>.

## Learning Another Language & Foreign Language Testing

There are a number of software applications that help you learn a foreign language. "Tell Me More" ([http://us.tellmemore.com/free\\_demo](http://us.tellmemore.com/free_demo)) and "Rosetta Stone" (<http://www.rosettastone.com/>), which everyone's seen on TV) are but two of these.

But don't go out and buy one just because everyone's talking about it. Before you order the software, do some research, including <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/LanguageLearning.pdf>.

- **Check the price.** The only direct Coast Guard-related funding available to reimburse you language software you buy on your own is the Coast Guard Foundation grant – which is only available to regular Coast Guard enlisted personnel and Reserve enlistees on active duty (i.e., not drilling Reservists or officers).
- **Ask around; see if you can find others who have it.** Find out if it helped them learn what they need to know to talk about Coast Guard-related matters (e.g., law enforcement) in the target language. Unless you just want to learn another language for fun, if the software doesn't help you learn what you need to learn it's probably not worth buying.

- **Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP).** If you want to earn FLPP as one of your unit's designated interpreters, it's highly unlikely a commercially-available language course will give you the proficiency needed to get the necessary rating on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dlpt.asp>). And keep in mind that even if it does, your unit has to have designated interpreter billets *and* you have to be formally assigned to one of those billets. (Most operational units have only two or three interpreter billets.)

If you really need to know a second language for work, the Coast Guard will probably pay for you to learn it. But a method other than software may be more effective. That is, if all you can do after months of using a computer program is make small talk that helps you locate a good restaurant, it's probably not worthwhile for Coast Guard purposes.

Check around to see if there are any intensive language training courses available in your area through a college/university, a commercial language school, or a government agency. For example, now that the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Protection agency work for the same cabinet secretary, you may find that you can get into a CBP language training program that either the Department or Coast Guard will pay for.

And, of course, you can always take college courses in the target language. Tuition assistance will pay for them and you'll also earn college credit from them.

You can also find loads of (mostly) free resources for learning foreign languages at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/languages.asp>.

## 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>.

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## 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.