

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #395

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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
SN Kyle Shillingford	TraCen (Gym)	E-PME-4

Well done, SN Shillingford!!!

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 – Is passing the DWO exam required for advancement to BM3?

**Q:** Do I have to pass the Deck Watch Officer exam to make BM3?

**A:** Yes, according to the BM3 Rating Performance Qualifications (RPOs). Specifically a note to supervisors states that to get item 4.C.10. signed off, “Member must pass the Navigation Rules, International-Inland (DWO) end-of-course test IAW provisions listed in ALCOAST 426/09. This cannot be deferred.”

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 three pages: **Continuing Education & Training** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/conted.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, **sectarian** and **secular**. (These definitions are taken from *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

*Sectarian* is a noun most often used to describe an adherent of a sect or religion (“Iraq is once again experiencing sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni muslims”).

*Secular* is usually used as an adjective meaning of or relating to the worldly or temporal (“While giving her sermon, the priest had more secular concerns on her mind”), not overtly or specifically religious (“Unusual for someone born in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, he wrote only secular music”), not ecclesiastical or clerical (“Henry VIII would have preferred to deal with Catherine of Aragon in a secular court, but she appealed directly to the Pope in Rome”).

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).

## FY13 Tuition Assistance

If you’re using or thinking of using TA, keep in mind that you can’t currently apply for TA for any courses starting on or after 01 October 2012. The Coast Guard Institute can’t obligate funds until Congress has signed a check to us for TA funding, via an appropriation bill.

At the moment, there’s no official information as to whether TA eligibility rules, maximum amounts (for the FY or per credit), or anything else will change. That is, we have no idea what TA will look like in FY13.

In the meantime, FY12 TA funds that haven’t been used can be used for FY13 courses. So if you didn’t use all \$4,500 of your FY12 TA allowance, you can now apply for TA for courses that begin between 01 and 15 October. Until further notice, to apply for TA you’ll have to download and fill out the PDF form (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4147.pdf>), then e-mail it to your ESO.

## Scholarship Deadline: 01 October

(courtesy of MSTCS Lumpkin at Sector Delaware Bay, from military.com)

“Each year the Council of College and Military Educators offers fifteen \$1,000 scholarships for Servicemembers, Military Spouses, and Veterans who are working towards the completion of higher education degrees. The 2013-14 CCME Scholarship Applications must be submitted online at <http://ccmeonline.org/scholarship>. This year’s online application will be available July 16 must be

completed by the October 1, 2012 scholarship application deadline. Read the Military Advantage Blog (<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2012/07/scholarship-update-ccme-2013/>) for more details.”

## Microsoft Home Use Program

Although it hasn't been advertised in an ALCOAST since last year, the Microsoft Home Use Program is still available to Coast Guard personnel. To quote ALCOAST 234/11, “This program is open to active duty, reserve, and civilian employees. Contractors are not eligible because they are not Coast Guard employees.”

You can buy a non-transferrable copy of Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010 for \$9.95 plus tax. “The software may be used for as long as the purchaser is employed by the Coast Guard. Upon leaving Coast Guard employment, the software must be removed from your computer.”

To buy the software, to go <http://hup.microsoft.com> and follow these steps:

- select appropriate country/region
- enter your Coast Guard e-mail address
- click on “Don't know your program code?”
- follow the instructions which will be sent to your Coast Guard e-mail address.

## Coast Guard Institute Deck Watch Officer Course

If you'd like the latest version of the Navigation Rules, International - Inland (COMDTINST M16672.2D) and a set of flash cards, you can order them through your ESO from the Coast Guard Institute. Keep in mind that you are responsible for correcting the NavRules in your book. You can find the most current updates on the NavCen web site at <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=navRulesContent>.

The DWINTR test is an open-book test, but you may only use the corrected NavRules book during the test. The only acceptable markings in the book are official changes and updates from the NavCen web site. Your book cannot contain personalized tabs, indexes, or notes.

## Having Trouble Passing the Deck Watch Officer Test?

If you've taken, but haven't passed, the Deck Watch Officer (DWINTO) test and want to improve your chances of doing so – and actually learn the rules while you're at it – you owe it to yourself to check out RulesMaster Pro (<http://www.rulesmaster.com/>). This interactive Australian software provides

- a complete self-paced learning program. Five lessons cover every Rule, with learning goals for each lesson clearly stated and a quiz after each session to assess progress and identify areas for further review;
- FlashCards II (almost 200 flashcards covering all parts of the international Rules and the IALA buoyage system) and QuickQuiz II (hundreds of questions in short-answer format adapted from the US Coast Guard Merchant Marine Deck Exams). These present realistic scenarios for you to identify the correct course of action; and
- an electronic version of the COLREGS, which allows you to search for a word or phrase or go to a specific Rule.

To get a sense of what the software offers, go to <http://www.rulesmaster.com/products/view/1> and <http://www.rulesmaster.com/products/slideshow/1>. It costs just over \$90.

## Exercise Your Mind

A lot of us go to the gym or elsewhere at lunch time to get physical exercise. If you work out at some other time, consider spending lunch exercising your mind.

There are a number of thought-provoking videos available on the Internet. Some I'll be showing are Michael Sandel's famous Harvard philosophy course, "Justice" (<http://www.harvardjustice.org/>) and the Fred Friendly seminars "Ethics in America" (<http://www.learner.org/resources/series81.html>) and "The Constitution: That Delicate Balance" (<http://www.learner.org/resources/series72.html>).

Each is just under an hour long. Drop by the Education next Tuesday at 1130 to watch. Feel free to bring your lunch.

## Giveaways in the Education Center

In addition to for-the-taking booklets on college majors and financing college, the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113) also has many copies of

- *College.edu – Online Resources for the Cyber-Savvy Student*
- *College Success Guide: Top 12 Secrets for Student Success*
- *Best Career and Education Web Sites*
- *Online Learning*
- *DANTES College Career Workbook*
- *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*

Drop by and see what's available.

## Help Yourself With a SOC Agreement

If you're taking courses from a school that's part of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) consortium, do yourself a favor and get a SOC agreement as soon as you've completed the number of credits your school requires for you to complete its residency requirement. Do so even if you're not in a SOCCOAST program.

Why? Because a SOC agreement (a degree plan and contract with your school) locks in the courses you have to pass to get your degree.

Why is this an issue? Unfortunately, colleges sometimes will change degree requirements while you're working on your degree. (Essentially, they move the goalposts.) If you have a SOC agreement with your school, the school has to honor it – even if the school changes the requirements for completing the degree program you're pursuing.

To find out if your school's a SOC school, go to SOC's web site ([http://www.soc.aascu.org/pubfiles/socmisc/SOC\\_Cnsrtm\\_Schools\\_2012-07.pdf](http://www.soc.aascu.org/pubfiles/socmisc/SOC_Cnsrtm_Schools_2012-07.pdf)).

## Struggling with Writing?

Do you sometimes feel unable to put your thoughts on paper – whether for a school assignment or at work? If so, a technique called *freewriting* may be for you. According to the short article "5 Freewriting Secrets for Being a 'Genius'" in *Psychology Today*, "At its most basic, it's about forcing your internal editor to stay away while you splash your most raw and unusual thoughts onto the page." Check it out at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/creating-in-flow/201011/5-freewriting-secrets-being-genius>. **Everyone who's applying for an officer program, and writing his/her narrative memo, should try this technique.**

## Course Dates on Your TA Application

A lot of people don't give much thought to the course starting and ending dates they put on their TA applications. But they can greatly affect you – especially the ending date. The course ending date you put on your application (which ends up on your authorization) determines how soon the Navy will go after you for payment.

If you don't send a grade report for each course listed on a TA authorization, 60 days after the course ending date listed on your authorization, the Navy's computer will automatically send you (by mail) a nastygram demanding either a grade report or payment for the course. (If you don't provide a grade report within 42 days of the course ending date, you'll be locked out of eTA and won't be able to use TA again until you've provided the grade report.) Thirty days after that first nastygram (if you haven't provided your grade report or sent payment for the course), the Navy's computer will send another one – this time, to your CO. If you blow off the second letter, the Navy will send one more thirty days later. It will advise you that the amount of TA paid to your school for the course will be deducted from your pay.

So what dates should you put into your application? The starting date should be the date the school's term starts: not the date orientation is held or the first day of classes. Similarly, the ending date should be the date the school's term ends: not the last day you attend class, the date of your last final, or the date final exams end.

## CollegeWeekLive

Are you or a dependent thinking about attending college full-time in the near future? If so, CollegeWeekLive hosts dozens virtual college open house events per month ([http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en\\_CA/guest/college\\_events](http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en_CA/guest/college_events)). Here are just a few of the institutions of higher learning you can check out in April through these events:

- University of California at Davis
- US Military Academy at West Point
- DePaul University
- Santa Fe College
- University of California at Riverside
- University of Melbourne
- University of Florida
- University of California at Irvine
- Roger Williams University
- North Carolina A&T University
- University of California at Los Angeles

CollegeWeekLive's goal is to help prospective students in their college planning by connecting them with colleges in a live, interactive environment. You'll be able to find information from dozens of colleges and universities on things like admissions, financing, admission test preparation, college visits, and finding the college which best fits your son, daughter, or yourself. In addition to the open house events, it also has video interviews with experts on such topics as "Financial Aid 101", "Common SAT Mistakes", "ACT Overview", "Dealing with Test Anxiety" and with representatives from many colleges and universities.

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

## Career & Education Web Site

MyFuture.com (<http://www.myfuture.com/>) is intended to help “young adults plan their next steps in life by bringing together the most recently available information about colleges, careers and military service opportunities from the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Defense, Education and Labor.”

The web site makes it possible for “users to explore all possibilities and gain insight into each option. For the first time, unbiased, detailed information on more than 900 civilian and military career fields and nearly 7,000 accredited colleges has been made accessible to young adults in one comprehensive site. In addition to college admissions details, average salaries and employment trends, myfuture.com provides advice on everything from taking the SAT to interviewing for a first job to preparing for boot camp. Step-by-step planning checklists are also provided as a guide for users, and favorite job and school information can be saved for return visits.”

## Free On-line Courses on Hundreds of Subjects

Most Coast Guard personnel are unaware of the free resource they have at their fingertips wherever they have computer access. SkillPort is the Coast Guard's portal to an on-line course provider the Coast Guard has contracted with. More than 700 Internet-based courses available free to uniformed personnel (regular and Reserve), their dependents, civilian civil service employees, and Auxiliaries, including 130 courses directly related to the Coast Guard's Leadership Competencies. You can work on a SkillPort course 24-hours a day, and – if you're running into difficulties or have a specific question the program doesn't seem to answer – you also have 24-hour access to real-time support. Content is personalized to suit your needs.

The courses fall into these general categories:

- Business skills & certifications
- Desktop applications
- IT professional curricula & certifications
- CG Unit Leadership Development Program
- Information systems technician
- Information systems management
- Legal compliance curricula
- Environmental, safety and health, and transportation curricula
- DHS training requirements

In addition, you can also Books 24x7, an on-line library of hundreds of books covering topics related to business, IT, office and personnel management, and office computer applications.

To log in and check it out, go to the CGPortal, then click on the "Training & Education" button on the blue bar, after which click on "Skillport" on the menu at the left side of the screen. At the bottom of the right-hand box on the "SIGN-ON TO SKILLPORT" screen, you'll see "SkillPort" and a small logo that says "SINGLE SIGN-ON" next to it. If you have a CAC reader and its software installed on a personal computer, you can access SkillPort from that computer as well as at work.

## College Credit for Some SkillPort Courses

In addition to being free to Coast Guard personnel and dependents, SkillPort courses may also earn you college credits.

“It really depends upon which course you took”, says Sue Riley at the Coast Guard Institute, and whether it was evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE). If it was, “you have to take a test proctored by the ESO and receive a passing score.”

Ms. Riley continues, “There is a form that must be completed and signed by both you and the ESO” which the ESO sends, along with the passing score report, to the Institute. “We will notify ACE that you passed and you can then submit an assessment request” and receive a transcript listing credits earned for the course.

## Cape May & Atlantic County Training & Employment Services

If anyone in your family is looking for work or to get training for a job, check out the Atlantic Cape May One-Stop Center on-line (<http://www.learntrainwork.com/main/training.asp>). Free job training may be available for many different types of work, including:

- Automobile Mechanic
- Cardiovascular Technician
- Casino Card Dealer
- Certified Nurse’s Aide
- Medical Assisting
- Massage Therapy
- Office Technology Specialist
- Phlebotomy
- Surgical Technician

## Big Changes in Officer Application Process

Largely thanks to the initiative of LT Ashly Thomas at CGRC, the process of applying for OCS and other officer programs has recently become a great deal less painful. Most significantly, for Coast Guard enlisted personnel, the amount of paperwork an applicant must complete and include in her application has been cut by almost 75%. New check-off sheets have been created reflecting the paperwork reduction and the number of different check-off sheets has been reduced from six to two: one for applicants that are currently in the Coast Guard, and one that is for civilians or members of another service.

All applicants are also now to contact their nearest recruiting office as early as possible in the process to ensure they are screened for eligibility. Working with recruiters early on will also ensure applicants receive guidance and mentorship throughout the application process.

Finally, the CGRC web site (<http://www.gocoastguard.com>) has been revised to reflect these changes and updated with the most current application deadlines, forms, etc.

## Finding Cheap Textbooks

If you’re taking college courses and are wondering where to find textbooks you don’t have to sell your car to pay for, don’t assume you’ll find the best prices at Amazon or Barnes & Noble. You can find more than two dozen web sites at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/books.asp> most of which allow you to compare prices from other sites.

## Not Sure What to Major In?

A lot of people want to take their first steps on the path to a college degree, but don’t know what field of study (major) to pursue. Is it important to pick a major before taking even general education courses? Probably not. But the sooner you’ve identified your major, the better you can plan which courses to take and in what order to take them.

These are important from a psychological perspective, in that you have specific courses to look forward to taking while taking general education courses you may not be all that enthusiastic about. Don’t discount the importance of this. One of the main things

that keeps people from completing their degrees is a lack of enthusiasm: they just get tired. This is especially true for military personnel, who are often taking only one or maybe two courses at a time.

When you know that you have to complete 120 credits to get a bachelor's degree and that you're only able to knock out 3 credits per school term, it's easy to fixate on the amount of time it will take to reach your goal and that degree may start to seem not worth the effort. Having that degree plan gives you a map to guide you toward your end goal. It helps you keep the big picture in mind. And it gives you something to look forward to, as you see that after completing the math course you dread you'll be able to take a course in your major that you know you'll be interested in.

If you're unsure what you want to major in, drop by the Education Center and pick up a copy of any of numerous books written to help you. Here's what we have on-hand:

- *College Majors that Work: A Step-by-Step Guide to Choosing and Using Your College Major*
- *50 Best College Majors for a Secure Future*
- *10 Best College Majors for Your Personality*
- *Quick Guide to College Majors and Careers*

We also have one copy of the CollegeBoards's *Book of Majors*, which has detailed descriptions of dozens of majors, how to determine if it's for you, recommended high school preparation, typical courses taken, what studying in that major is like, career options and trends, etc.

## Is Distance Learning for You?

If you're trying to decide between taking courses in a classroom or via distance learning (aka distance education), you owe it to yourself to use one or more of the on-line assessment tools available from DANTES and various colleges (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#01>). Spending some time with these tools could save you time and a lot of aggravation down the road.

## "G.I. Jobs" & "Military Times Edge" Magazines

The current issues of the magazines "G.I. Jobs" and "Military Times Edge" are available in the Education Center whenever you're in the neighborhood and want to pick up a copy. Or you can use the on-line versions:

<http://www.gijobs.com/digimagsignup/index.html> and <http://www.militarytimesedge.com/>.

Both have very good and timely information on dozens of topics related to education and transition from a military to a civilian career.

## Are You Preparing for an ASVAB or Other Math Test?

TraCen Cape May has acquired the DVD course, "The Secrets of Mental Math" to help you prepare to re-take the AR or MK parts of the ASVAB or to learn short-cuts that will help you in college courses or in everyday life. The course includes 12 half-hour lectures. Here's a bit about it the course.

"One key to improving and expanding your math potential lies in the powerful ability to perform mental math calculations. Solving basic math problems in your head is a gateway to success in understanding and mastering higher mathematical fields such as algebra, statistics, and calculus. It's a skill that offers other lifelong benefits, including

- giving you a competitive edge in school or at work;

- keeping your mind active and sharp at any age;
- improving your performance on standardized tests; and
- learning to solve problems by using a variety of methods.

“Mental mathematics also is valuable when you’re shopping for groceries or figuring out how much to tip at a restaurant. Believe it or not, learning how to do mental math can be fun. “The Secrets of Mental Math” is Professor Arthur T. Benjamin’s exciting 12-lecture course which guides you through all the essential skills, tips, and tricks for improving and enhancing your ability to solve a range of mathematical problems right in your head.”

Read more on this course at [http://www.thegreatcourses.com/tgc/courses/course\\_detail.aspx?cid=1406](http://www.thegreatcourses.com/tgc/courses/course_detail.aspx?cid=1406). If you decide it’s up your alley, individuals and groups are welcome to use it in the Education Center.

## Online Academic Skills Course

Another resource to use both for tests like the AFCT/ASVAB and for college courses is Peterson’s Online Academic Skills Course (OASC). To quote its web site, it’s “designed for individuals who want to build a solid academic foundation by improving their math and verbal skills in order to score well on exams, advance their education, and excel in their careers. . . . OASC is available for free 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the web to service members (regular and Reserve), civilian employees, and their families.”

The course (at <http://www.nelnetsolutions.com/dantes>) includes

- a pre-test (to gauge your strengths and weaknesses)
- a Customized Learning Path™ (a personalized set of lessons based on your pre-test results)
- lessons which include interactive activities, flash cards, quizzes, and practice tests,
- a post-test (to evaluate your progress).

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/oasc-faq.pdf>.

## 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>.

### 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**

01 AUG 2012 – 30 SEP 2012  
 01 OCT 2012 – 30 NOV 2012

**Scholarship Award Dates**

October 2012 (on-line)  
 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.

**TraCen Cape May Testing Schedule**

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

Mondays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Tuesdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Wednesdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs\* **or** Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT)

Thursdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs; college tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

Fridays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

\* If someone has made an appointment to take a DLPT (a 6-hour test), there will be no EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs.

College placement, AFCT, and all other tests will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis.

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 I'm 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 Rating Performance Qualifications (RPQs) for each rate.

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.