

TraCen Cape May Education Update #408

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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
HS3 Leah Croteau*	HSWL FO Cape May	HS2
MEC William Herr*	TraCen (Security)	ME1

* First attempt

Well done, both of you!!!

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 – What do employers think of on-line degrees?

Q: I'm thinking of starting work on a college degree, but I'm worried that if I get my degree from an on-line school, I won't be able to find a job. Do employers look differently at people who get their degrees from on-line rather than brick-and-mortar schools?

A: A summary of the latest survey of the people who hire new employees (human resource managers) indicates the following:

- More than one-third of organizations (34%) reported that job candidates who have obtained their degrees online were viewed as favorably as job applicants with traditional degrees (i.e., brick-and-mortar).
- More than one-half of organizations (55%) indicated that if two job applicants with the same job experience were applying for a job, it would not make a difference whether the job candidate's degree was obtained through an online or traditional (i.e., brick-and-mortar) degree program.
- The higher the position in the organization, the less acceptable the online degree credentials. Four out of 10 organizations (43%) indicated that an online degree credential is acceptable for a job applicant seeking an entry-level position, but only 15% of organizations indicated that an online degree is acceptable for a job applicant seeking an executive-level position.
- Only 11% of organizations stated that job candidates frequently or always identified on their resumes whether their degrees were obtained through an online degree program.
- 79% of organizations indicated that they had hired a job applicant with an online degree in the last 12 months.

To see the complete survey results, go to: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/2010SHRMsurvey.pptx>. See, especially, slides 4, 9, and 10-15.

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 three pages: **Studying & Test-taking Skills** (<http://uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/studying.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, the difference between **elicit** and **illicit**. (These definitions are taken from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

There are two groups of meanings for the verb *elicit*. In the first, it means to draw forth or bring out something latent or potential ("The nurse, sensing the previously silent senior had much wisdom, was able to elicit a story from her that helped others understand the situation"). In the second group, it means to call forth or draw out a response or reaction ("The lecturer's comments elicited many questions from the audience").

Illicit is an adjective meaning not permitted, unlawful, or illegal ("The criminal was arrested for his illicit activities").

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.

Common Latin Phrases Everyone Should Know

Ad infinitum: Translated literally, this term means to infinity, endlessly, or without limit. It can be used to describe something that seems to (or actually) goes on forever.

From: <http://oedb.org/library/beginning-online-learning/50-common-latin-phrases-every-college-student-should-know> and <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ad%2Binfinity>

TraCen Education Center Hours Changing

Starting Monday, 28 January 2013, the Education Center will have new hours because I'll have a different work schedule (see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/skcd.pdf>).

The only noticeable difference from your perspective will be that I won't be administering tests every other Friday. This should inconvenience few people: out of 224 EOCTs/RATs and AQEs I administered in CY2012, only 27 (12%) were given on Fridays.

TraCen Cape May Testing Schedule

As of Monday, 28 January 2013, tests at TraCen Cape May will be 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

Alternating 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 I don't want to disturb examinees I 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.

Scholarship Deadline, 31 January

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) is currently accepting applications for the Joanne Holbrook Patton Military Spouse Scholarship program. **The application deadline is Thursday, 31 January 2013.**

Scholarships are awarded to spouses of members of all uniformed services. Spouses of current, retired, or deceased active duty and reserve service members may apply. Applications are accepted online only. The scholarships (worth up to \$1,000) may be used for tuition, fees, and residential room and board for: GED, ESL vocational training, professional certification, undergraduate, or graduate programs. Programs may be taken live or on-line, full-time or part-time. A valid military ID is required to apply for this program. Scholarship selection is based on short-answer questions and an essay question that will help NMFA get to know the applicant better. The application also includes a survey that will help NMFA advocate for education changes on behalf of military spouses. For details and to apply, go to www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/military-spouse-scholarships.

Beware the “Military-Friendly” Label

A lot of unscrupulous, as well as many legitimate, colleges, universities, vocational schools, and other educational service providers have realized that “military-friendly” is a great way to increase business. Don’t be suckered. Before making a decision as important as where to use tuition assistance or GI Bill funds, do your homework. Find out as much as you can about how institutions of interest operate, whether graduates have actually learned what they wanted to learn, whether the knowledge and/or skills graduates acquired actually helped them get the kind of work they intended their schooling to get them, etc.

For example, does the institution require you to sign a contract up-front which obligates you to take a specific number of courses per term? per year? per degree? No reputable institution of higher learning will do this.

Does the institution automatically enroll you in courses on your degree plan, without your approval? Some do, then stick you with a bill if you don’t submit a TA authorization to pay for them – even if you never took the course.

The term “military-friendly” by itself means nothing. Disregard it entirely when choosing a school. A little extra work up front researching potential schools could spare you many headaches (e.g., having to change majors or schools) later.

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. This material is available any time during working hours (including lunch time). ***The fact that this information is printed here does not constitute an endorsement of the corresponding schools or programs.***

University of Nevada, Reno has a new on-line executive MBA program. Its “online format allows you to continue working while earning an Executive MBA in two years. The 12-course program “is competitively priced at \$24,000, payable in installments of \$4,000 each semester.” The application deadline is 01 May 2013. For more information, go to <http://www.emba.unr.edu>.

United States Sports Academy is one of a few institutions that has distance learning programs for bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees. For complete information, go to <http://www.usa.edu/>.

Space Camp & Space Academy Scholarships

The Military Child Education Coalition funds up to 15 scholarships every year for children enrolled in grades 6 through 9 to attend a six-day Space Camp or Space Academy program in Huntsville, AL. Its purpose is to show young men and women firsthand what it takes to be an astronaut. Activities include simulated Space Shuttle missions, training simulators, rocket building and launches, scientific experiments, and lectures of the past, present, and future of space exploration. The program takes a unique, fun, and hands-on approach to learning outside the classroom. Students leave with a greater appreciation for school and their studies.

For more information about the scholarship and a link to the application form, go to <http://www.militarychild.org/parents-and-students/programs/bernard-curtis-brown-ii-memorial-space-camp-scholarship>. And to check out the programs themselves, go to <http://www.spacecamp.com/>. ***The application deadline is Sunday, 10 March 2013.***

Summer Energy Career Academy

The National Energy Center of Excellence at Bismarck State University in North Dakota is soliciting 14- to 16-year-old participants in its second Summer Energy Career Academy. The three-day program (25-27 June) is “designed to provide participants an opportunity to engage in various energy-related lab experiments, visit energy companies and learn about the amazing career opportunities”. Dorm rooms and food will be provided at no cost to the participants; transportation to and from the Academy is participants’ responsibility, however.

The applications deadline is Friday, 01 March 2013. For more information (including the complete agenda and the on-line application), go to <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/nece/academy/>.

Degrees Related to Maritime Law Enforcement

If you're an ME, are otherwise involved in maritime law enforcement, or would like to work in that field when you leave the Coast Guard, you might be interested in getting a degree tailor-made for personnel in the field. An article in the December 2012 issue of *U.S. Coast Guard Forum* describes programs at ten different colleges designed to accept credits earned by graduates of the Coast Guard's Maritime Law Enforcement Academy. Check it out at <http://www.uscgf-kmi.com/cgf-home/457-cgf-2012-volume-4-issue-4-december/6238-criminal-justice.html>.

A Common Myth About College Financial Aid

Parents of college-age children "often don't realize . . . that money set aside for college does not represent some sort of money time bomb. These assets usually don't hurt a family's chances for financial aid." For the complete article, go to http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505145_162-57562859/a-common-myth-about-college-financial-aid/.

G.I. Jobs and Edge Magazines

If you're leaving the Coast Guard in the relatively near-term, you might want to drop by the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113) and pick up a copy of *G.I. Jobs* or *Edge* magazine, or both. In them are articles on

- personal finances (in the current issue, income tax return tips)
- the transition from a military to a civilian career,
- stories about how military personnel have landed on their feet in new civilian careers,
- feature stories profiling specific career fields,
- short profiles of private sector career fields,
- items on applying for federal government jobs,
- items about starting/running your own business,
- education-related items, and
- items on how to get hired.

And, as is to be expected, there are lots of ads – but these are mostly ads to let readers know about job opportunities.

If you'd rather, you can view the on-line versions at <http://mydigimag.rrd.com/publication/?i=140695> (for the latest *G.I. Jobs*) and <http://www.militarytimesedge.com/> (for *Edge*).

Do You Want to Take the ACT?

I'll be administering the **ACT Assessment** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) on **Thursday, 14 February 2013 starting at 0730**. There are two seats available on a first come first served basis, so let me know ASAP if you want to take one of these tests.

DANTES Test Control Officers (ESOs who've been specifically designated) may 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 free and you'd likely have to pay for the other. The ACT costs \$35; the SAT costs \$50.

ESOs may administer the ACT at any time of the year, and can administer the SAT during all months except July, August, and September. 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. As for actual preparation materials, check out <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp#prep>.

Preparing for the ACT Assessment & SAT Reasoning Test

Free eKnowledge ACT and SAT preparation software is available through contributions from NFL and MLB players, as well as many other organizations (<http://www.eknowledge.com/USCG>).

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, licensing, processing, handling, and worldwide shipping.

Other resources, include the web sites of the ACT Assessment (<http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html>) and SAT Reasoning Test (<http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice>) and

- ePrep (<http://www.eprep.com/>)
- Grockit (<http://grockit.com/>)
- Number2.com (<http://www.number2.com/>).

8 Ways to Boost Your ACT and SAT Scores

This article, on the blog "The College Solution" (<http://www.thecollegesolution.com/8-ways-to-boost-your-act-and-sat-scores>), actually provides five tips to help you prepare to take an ACT or SAT and three about what to do with the scores you receive. The on-line preparation resources alone make the article worth reading, but there's sound advice throughout the short article.

Interested in Working with Animals?

In case you're interested in working with animals in a health-care setting, you may have discovered it's difficult to find a distance-learning program that helps you get a veterinary technology degree. After a lot of research, HS3 Katelyn Danielson and I found one program, at San Juan College in New Mexico (<http://www.sanjuacollege.edu/pages/3433.asp>). An added bonus is that it's extremely affordable: \$41/semester credit plus a \$6/credit "technology fee".

Transferring GI Bill Benefits

Do all the following bullets apply to you?

- approaching your 16th year of military service
- planning to retire at 20 years of service
- planning to transfer new (Post-9/11) GI Bill benefits to one or more dependents?

If so, you should transfer your benefits ASAP.

Why? Because (except in a few circumstances) you must serve four years of service (in either the regular Coast Guard or the Reserve) after the date you transfer benefits to dependents. At the moment, this is true even if you've already served more than 20 years (except in a few cases, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33b.asp#obligation>).

This doesn't mean you have to extend or re-enlist (if you're enlisted). It does mean that you are obligated to serve those extra four years. To quote the Coast Guard's GI Bill expert, Mr. Reidus Stokes,

By transferring benefits, service members agree to obligate an additional 12 - 48 months of service [depending on when they became eligible to retire] from the date their transfer was executed. As a result, this office updates Direct Access to reflect their obligated service for the additional 12 - 48 months. The key point here is that “agree to obligate service” is not the same as “extend or reenlist.” Once the service members [sic] transfer of benefits is approved, OPM PSC PSD-fs enters DA and updates a data field called “Obligated Service.” It’s only visible to Career Managers, and it doesn’t change the members [sic] End Of Enlistment. What it does however, is allow OPM to screen all discharges, retirements, etc., to ensure the member doesn’t have obligated service.

If the service member choose to separate or not to obligate service and hasn’t met the service obligation, they must go back into the Portal and revoke their transfer (return transfer months to zero). If any benefits were used, they will be placed in an overpayment status by the Department of Veteran Affairs. It is also required that they visit the PSD (FS) website (<http://www.uscg.mil/psc/psd/fs/GI%20Bill.asp>), print the Revocation of Post 9/11 Transfer Benefits, sign, date, and email or fax the completed form back to this office.

Don’t wait until a week or two before your retirement date to transfer your new GI Bill benefits to dependents!

Limitations on CGMA Supplemental Education Grants

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance will reimburse their first associate’s or bachelor’s degree may request reimbursement of various expenses not covered by tuition assistance. For more information, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#seg>. However, to quote from the CGMA Manual, “Assistance is not authorized for costs associated with preparatory courses, licenses (maritime, real estate, AC&R, etc.), or certification courses (computer, maritime, law, medical, etc).”

End-of-Course Tests/Rating Advancement Tests

At least once a week, someone will show up to take a rating end-of-course test (now called Rating Advancement Test, or RAT) or an E-PME Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE) without his or her RPQs or E-PME Performance Requirements properly signed off. ESOs are prohibited from administering either a RAT or an AQE unless the statement in the REMARKS section on page 2 of the current RPQs or Performance Requirements is completed by a person authorized to do so.

In the e-mail I send out to everyone who has scheduled at test, I include the link to the Learning Management System part of the CGPortal (<https://elearning.uscg.mil>) so you can make sure you have the current RPQs or Performance Requirements. I send out these e-mails for your benefit, not mine. Please read them and make sure you have the correct version of the form completed in all respects before you show up to take a test. Otherwise, I’ll have to turn you away and you’ll have to reschedule your test. This could mean missing a servicewide exam deadline.

Become a Teacher Without Majoring in Education

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Are you aware you don’t necessarily have to have a degree in education to teach? That is, in many states you can have a bachelor’s degree in some other major and still teach. And some states are actively looking for people who have degrees in a subject for which there’s a shortage of teachers. For example, math are sought to teach math. Check out the information throughout the Teachers Count web site (start at <http://www.teacherscount.org/wannateach/faq.shtml#5>).

Also, Troops to Teachers provides counseling and referral services to military personnel interested in beginning a second career in public education as a teacher. And the DANTES Troops to Teachers office will help you identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification, and employment opportunities. The main web site (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/index.asp) has all kinds of information about the program. Including a new on-line way to determine if you’re eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers: http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp.

Coast Guard Institute Transcripts

The American Council on Education (ACE) evaluates “A” and “C” school curricula to determine how many credits you would have earned in college if you had covered there the same material you covered in an “A” or “C” school.

You can get a transcript of these credits from the Coast Guard Institute by downloading and submitting a form (http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1561.pdf) through your ESO. When filling out the form, you have a number of options as to what you want the Institute to do.

- If this is the first time you’ve submitted a transcript request, check the “Assessment” box.
- If you’ve submitted an assessment request before, and want to update it, check the “Update to Assessment” box.

From either of these, you’ll receive an unofficial transcript by e-mail from the Institute.

- If you want an official transcript (which can be sent to a college, university, or your ESO), check the “Official Transcript” box.

Unofficial transcripts differ from official transcripts in that they’re not printed on paper (you’ll receive a PDF file). Official transcripts are printed on special, watermarked paper that makes tampering obvious and they have the Coast Guard Institute’s seal on them. To see if credits earned through military service will count toward a degree, you have to have an official transcript sent to the school you want to get the degree from.

If you’re just curious about how many credits you’ve accumulated in which subjects and don’t feel you need an assessment, you can go to ACE’s web site (<http://www.militaryguides.acenet.edu/>).

Bear in mind that every college and university in the U.S. has its own criteria for deciding whether to accept credits earned anywhere else. So credits that show up on your Coast Guard transcript may or may not be accepted toward majors and degrees at your preferred school.

Got Student Debt?

A recent issue of *The Washington Monthly* contained a short guide to different types of student loan repayment plans. You can find it at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/finance005.doc>.

Also, check out the info at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/loans.asp#repayment> and http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201210_cfpb_servicemember-student-loan-guide.pdf.

More Scholarship Sources

The scholarships described here are just a few of thousands 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>.

CGES Dependents’ Scholarships

Every year (assuming funds are available), the CG Exchange System offers scholarships to dependents of Coast Guard personnel (regular and Reserve military, retired military, current civilian NAF and appropriated-funds employees, uniformed PHS personnel, and Auxiliarists.) This year, the application **deadline is 28 February 2013**. For complete information, see ALCGPSC 147/12.

ScholarshipAmerica

Among other things, the web site ScholarshipAmerica (http://scholarshipamerica.org/open_scholarships.php) has descriptions of and links to not-so-widely-known scholarships. (The less well-known they are, the more likely you are to be successful in getting them.) The descriptions include opening and closing dates.

Before Diving In, Find Out if Distance Learning is 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.

Find the Right College for You

Check out the Department of Education's "College Navigator" web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>).

Free Language Software

Mango Languages on-line now available to District 5 personnel, courtesy of Ms. Monica Bailey (full-time ESO at Base Portsmouth). Its features include:

- 50+ basic courses (35 foreign languages and 15 ESL Courses)
- 45 complete courses (32 foreign languages and 13 ESL Courses)
- Ability to download and use mobile versions (for iPhone and Android App)
- Unlimited remote access to all online course material.

You can get more information from Mango's web site at www.mangolanguages.com. If you're interested in using the program, contact Ms. Bailey at monica.r.bailey@uscg.mil.

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), Mango (www.mangolanguages.com), and "Rosetta Stone" (<http://www.rosstattastone.com/>), which everyone's seen on TV) are but a few 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 and/or practicing foreign languages at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/languages.asp>.

Free Downloadable Books, Audiobooks, Music, and Videos

You can download thousands of free entertainment files (over 100,000 items to choose from) via the Navy General Library Program (<http://navy.lib.overdrive.com/>). To use it, you'll first need to register as a new user at Navy Knowledge Online (<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/>). This service is available to all uniformed personnel, retirees, and their dependants.

Don't limit yourself to just the Navy General Library Program, however. Navy Knowledge Online contains

- reference materials of all kinds (e.g., *Navy Times*, national magazines, academic and professional journals, and more),
- Petersons Lifelong Learning resources (e.g., CLEP & DSST prep; prep resources for various military tests; ACT, SAT, PSAT prep; career & certification test prep);
- academic, military, and career e-books;
- search engines for finding colleges and scholarships;
- personal development resources (physical and mental health, fitness, financial management, safety); and
- leadership resources.

All these are free.

Parents: Associate's Degree Before Bachelor's Saves Money

A report released yesterday by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (<http://www.studentclearinghouse.info/snapshot/docs/SnapshotReport8-GradRates2-4Transfers.pdf>) found that 71% of the students who earned an associate's degree "and then moved to a four-year college graduated with a bachelor's degree within four years of transferring," according to Katherine Mangan in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on 08 November. For those who didn't have an associate's degree before transferring, the number was 55%.

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.

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 which you're welcome to check out. 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.