

TraCen Cape May Education Update #409

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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 Christopher Taylor	CGC Ibis	BM1
ME1 Jerome Jackson	Sector Delaware Bay (VBST Cape May)	ME2

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 I have to show the ESO to take an EOCT?

Q: I’ve taken EOCTs from three ESOs in the past two years. One just sat me down to take the test and never checked anything I had with me, another told me I had to show her all EPQs for the test I was taking were signed off, and the last said all he

needed to see was the statement on page 2 of the EPQs completed by someone authorized to sign it. Is there a policy? If so, what is it?

- A:** ALCOAST 586/05 stated that “All officers, chiefs and work-center supervisors are expected to enable the professional development of personnel in their charge and assist them in preparing for advancement to the next higher pay grade. This effort includes (but is not limited to) providing on-the-job training opportunities, **validating that all performance qualifications are accomplished IAW referenced standards**, and ensuring all course materials are completed prior to allowing an EOCT/AQE to be administered.” (emphasis added)

Volume II of the ESO SOP laid out the ESO’s responsibility: “Prior to administering an EOCT or AQE, the ESO must ensure the member has completed their performance requirements for the related course. The member must present the signed CG-3303c (for the PQG) or the CG-1510-2 (for the EPME) to the ESO prior to taking an exam.”

To do this, the ESO checks the following statement in the “REMARKS” section on page 2 of each rating’s RPQs: “I certify that the person named below has satisfactorily completed all rate related course work and Rating Performance Qualifications (RPQ) for pay grade E-_____ and is eligible to take the end of course test (EOCT).”

The ESO verifies that your shop chief, division officer, or other person appointed by your CO has filled in the pay grade of the test you’re planning to take, dated the statement, printed his/her name, and signed it. That is, the statement should say “E-6” if you’re taking the BMI or IT1 or any other E-6 RAT. It should say “E-5” if you’re taking the EM2, MK2, or any other E-5 RAT. This means you’ll need a separate page 2 to take a test for a different pay grade.

The ESO who’s administering the test (now called a Rating Advancement Test or RAT) may not administer it without first verifying this statement is completed. And the same is true for the E-PME-4, -6, and -8 AQEs: the statement on page 2 of your Performance Requirements must have the correct pay grade entered before you can take the test.

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: **ACT** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.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 **altar** and **alter**. (These definitions are taken from *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

Although pronounced exactly alike, these two words have completely different meanings. *Altar* is a noun describing a usually raised structure or place on which sacrifices are offered or incense is burned in religious worship or, in Christianity specifically, a sacred table on which the Eucharistic elements are consecrated or which serves as a center of worship or ritual. (“The high priest sacrificed a lamb on the altar.”)

Alter, on the other hand, is a verb meaning to make different without changing into something else (“Beethoven wrote three overtures to his opera, ‘Fidelio’, each of which was somewhat altered from the previous version”).

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

Mea culpa: The literal translation of this phrase is “I am to blame”. In addition to admitting you did something wrong, this phrase implies that you’re sorry for whatever it was you did.

From: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mea%2Bculpa>

Weekly Education Update Becomes Bi-weekly

After nearly ten years of publishing a newsletter every Friday, my work schedule change seems like a good reason to send it out every other Friday. (I’ll have a day off every other Friday.) So you’ll see the next newsletter on Friday, 01 February. The next after that will be on 15 February, and so on.

TraCen Education Center Hours Changing

Starting next 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/sked.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 next 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 probably 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.

Only One More Week: 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.

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>.

Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel Courses

A lot of people want to know if they can use tuition assistance (TA) or the GI Bill to pay for a vessel captain's license course. The general rule for TA is that the course has to be offered by a nationally- or regionally-accredited institution AND must yield credit applicable to a degree at the school that's offering the course.

As to the GI Bill, it all depends on whether the state in which the course is offered has approved the course for GI Bill funding. For more info about whether a particular course is covered by the GI Bill, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-o.asp#saa>.

Mr. Monty Mathis, full-time ESO at Sector St. Petersburg, has identified what seems to be the only college which offers distance learning courses to prepare you to take the 100-ton captain's license exam. And, because you can earn college credit for them (through Northeast Wisconsin Technical College), they're covered by TA. For more information, go to http://www.nwtc.edu/academics/degrees/publicsafety/criminaljustice/Documents/8657GSPS%20Public%20Safety%20Maritime%20Course_brochure.pdf.

GI Bill Transfer & Service Obligation

Despite ESOs' best efforts since August 2009 to ensure everyone knows about the additional service requirement you incur when you transfer new (Post-9/11) GI Bill education benefit, some people are telling us they're about to retire and weren't aware of it.

The general rule is that you must serve for four years after the date you transfer any or all of your benefit. For those who became eligible for retirement between 01 August 2009 and 01 August 2012, different service obligation periods apply (see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33b.asp#obligation>).

If you've transferred any or all of your benefit and leave the Coast Guard voluntarily during the service obligation period, you "must go back into the Portal and revoke [your] transfer (return transfer months to zero)," according to Mr. Reidus Stokes, the GI Bill person at PSC. You'll also need to "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 it, date it, and e-mail or fax” it to him. “If any benefits were used, [you] will be placed in an overpayment status by the Department of Veteran Affairs” and the DVA will follow its procedures to recover the money it paid out for your dependent’s education, housing allowance, etc.

If you believe you were not properly notified of the opportunity to transfer your new GI Bill benefit to dependents while you were in uniform, you can request a correction of military records to allow for transferability. To do this, submit an “Application for Correction of Military Record Under the Provisions of Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1552” (<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/eforms/dd0149.pdf>) to the Coast Guard Board for Correction of Military Records.

Be aware, however, that (to quote the instructions on the form) you must “show to the satisfaction of the Board by the evidence that you supply, or it must otherwise satisfactorily appear in the record, that the alleged entry or omission in the record was in error or unjust. Evidence, in addition to documents, may include affidavits or signed testimony of witnesses, executed under oath, and a brief of arguments supporting the application. All evidence not already included in your record must be submitted by you. The responsibility of securing evidence rests with you.”

Effective Studying

An article in the 01 May 2009 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* debunks common perceptions about the best way to study for a course – any course.

Most people think the best way is to read carefully, write down unfamiliar terms and look up their meanings, make an outline, and re-read each lesson/chapter.

[S]ome scientists would say that you’ve left out the most important step: *Put the book aside and hide your notes. Then recall everything you can. Write it down, or, if you’re uninhibited, say it out loud.*

Two psychology journals have recently published papers showing that this strategy works, the latest findings from a decades-old body of research. When students study on their own, “active recall” – recitation, for instance, or flashcards and other self-quizzing – is the most effective way to inscribe something in long-term memory.

The author of one of these papers, professor of psychology Mark McDaniel (from Washington University in St. Louis), says that “it is generally a mistake to read and reread a textbook passage. That strategy feels intuitively right to many students – but it’s much less effective than active recall, and it can give rise to a false sense of confidence.”

“When you’ve got your chemistry book in front of you, everything’s right there on the page, it’s all very familiar and fluent,” says Jeffrey D. Karpicke, an assistant professor of psychology at Purdue University and lead author of a paper in the May issue of *Memory* about students’ faulty intuitions about effective study habits.

“So you could say to yourself, ‘Yeah, I know this. Sure, this is all very familiar,’” Mr. Karpicke continues. “But of course, when you go in to take a classroom test, or in real life when you need to reconstruct your knowledge, the book’s not there. In our experiments, when students repeatedly read something, it falsely inflates their sense of their own learning.”

You can read the whole article at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/20090501CHE.pdf>. And for more tips on effective studying, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studying.asp>.

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/>.

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.

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/.

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.

Looking for a Post-CG Career with a Future?

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

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

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

- the nature of the work,
- required training,
- other qualifications,
- advancement opportunities,
- current and future employment prospects,
- earnings,
- related occupations,
- sources of additional information.

Thomas Edison State University here in New Jersey has an on-line Bachelor of Science in Applied Science and Technology (BSAST) degree in Energy Utility Technology (<http://www.tesc.edu/ast/bsast/Energy-Utility.cfm>).

And Bismarck State College in North Dakota (<http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/programs/>) can also get you ready for these careers via its on-line certification, associate’s and bachelor’s degree, and non-degree programs in the following energy-related fields:

- Electric power
- Electric transmission systems
- Energy management
- Instrumentation & control
- Mechanical maintenance technology
- Nuclear power technology
- Petroleum production
- Power plant technology
- Processing plant technology
- Renewable generation

- Water & waste water.

If you follow the news, you know that these industries are crying for people with training in these areas.

The maximum per-credit tuition is currently \$227 (depending on which program you're pursuing) with fees totaling approximately \$22/credit. For more information, go to <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/programs/>.

Thinking of Starting Your Own Business?

If you're thinking about starting your own business, either while you're still in uniform or after you leave the Coast Guard, check out a sampling of resources for entrepreneurs at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>.

There you'll find general resources applicable to all types of small businesses on many different subjects (e.g., drafting a business plan, finding funding, etc.). There are also sections aimed at those interested in starting not-for-profit businesses and those interested in social entrepreneurship. Contrary to the popular notion, not-for-profit doesn't mean "no profit" or that you can't earn a substantial salary. It just means most of the profit has to be put toward specific things, usually plowed back into the business. There's also a section with links to labor market information.

Finally, drop by the Education Center to pick up a copy of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Chapters 7 ("Self-Employment and Small Business") and 8 ("Temporary Work, Contract Employment, Freelancing, Teleworking, and Volunteering") have many great leads.

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.

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.

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.rosettastone.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>.

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.