

TraCen Cape May Education Update #250

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Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
YN2 Bridgette Cooper	TraCen (Recruit PersRU)	E-PME-6

Well done!

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

Q: I'm interested in getting Rosetta Stone software to learn a foreign language. Is there a military discount available or some kind of financial assistance I can get to help me buy it?

A: Unfortunately for us, Rosetta Stone's advertising brought I so much business for the company that it sees no need to offer discounts and even pulled licenses it had given public libraries so they could make it available for free.

You can request a grants from the Coast Guard Foundation and Mr. van der Putten (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#cgf>) to get reimbursed for the cost of Rosetta Stone or other language software. However, be aware that there's no guarantee that if you apply for these grants you'll receive one or both. They both depend on separate private funding sources which may not always be available.

This being the case, don't pay for something you don't absolutely need assuming you'll get reimbursed through these grants.

DSSTs

The DSST program (formerly DANTES Subject Standardized Test program) is an extensive series of examinations in college subjects that are comparable to the final or end-of-course examinations in undergraduate courses, akin to the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). For each of the 37 DSSTs the American Council on Education (ACE) recommends 3 semester hours of credit. Essentially, DSSTs (like CLEP tests) allow you to obtain college credit without having to take college courses. Quoting from the brochure, "DSST is an effective method to provide your college with evidence of prior training and experience. In fact, the 37 exams funded by DANTES complement other credit by exam programs such as CLEP." For more information, stop by the Education Center or go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>.

Preparing for CLEP Tests & DSSTs

On-line practice tests for both DSSTs and CLEP tests are available at no charge to military personnel. CLEP tests are available through the Coast Guard Learning Portal (<http://learning.uscg.mil>). Once you've logged in, follow this path: Education > Study Guide for DANTES Exams > Launch then select the test you'd like to take. You'll receive a certificate if you pass a practice exam with a score of 70% or higher.

To find practice DSSTs, go to <http://ibt1.prometric.com/index.asp?ibt=3881494402&>. There you'll have to register (if this is your first time at the site) and then select a test from the list of 37 DSSTs available.

Although ESOs can't require you to take a practice test before taking the real thing, you're strongly encouraged to do so. Taking a practice test help you better prepare for the real thing.

One of the Coast Guard's leadership competencies is stewardship. In a nutshell, this means making sure our resources are not wasted. Every CLEP exam given to a Coast Guard student costs the service an average of \$110, whether you pass or fail it. Right now about 65% of those who take CLEP tests fail them. This translates into a lot of wasted dollars.

CG Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Foundation grant programs are funded each year through generous gifts from the Foundation and the Vander Putten Family. The total amount of grant requests may exceed the total amount of gifts to the grant programs.

Currently, the Coast Guard Institute (which operates the grant programs) is awaiting funding from the Foundation. Once funding has been received, payment checks will sent out to applicants in the order their applications were received until all funds have disbursed.

When funds arrive and disbursed, the Institute will e-mail the recipients to advise when the checks were mailed. The Institute advises that if you submitted your request on any form but the current version (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1560-10A.pdf>) your application will not be processed. **All applications I've received this year have been on the correct form, so there's no need to re-submit yours if you've submitted one since 01 January 2009.**

Junior Officers, Listen Up!

Many junior officers are unaware of the procedures for ensuring promotion boards and detailers know about higher education they've completed and their extracurricular career development activities. You should fill out form CG-4082 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4082.pdf>) and e-mail it (with scanned copies – front and back – of your official transcript or a certified copy of it) to the appropriate person at the Personnel Service Center Records Branch (adm-3) (<http://www.uscg.mil/psc/adm/adm3/contact.asp>).

If you want an advanced degree entered into DirectAccess, fill out form PPC-2030 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PPC2030.pdf>), attach copies of your diploma and the corresponding transcript, and take it to your SPO or other YN who enters data into DirectAccess.

Finally, to have Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and other standardized test scores sent directly to PSC (adm-3) – which is highly recommended – follow the instructions outlined on page 14 of the *officer Postgraduate and Advanced Education Application Process Guide* (http://www.uscg.mil/opm/Opm1/Opm1docs/PG/AY10Docs/AY10_PG-Adv%20Ed_Process_Guide.pdf).

You can find an on-line version of this item (with hyperlinks to the forms and Guide) at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/opd.asp>.

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 which are hoping to tap into the military market. This information is available for browsing any time during working hours (including lunch time). ***The fact that this information is available does not constitute an endorsement of the corresponding schools or programs.***

The most recent offerings are

Excelsior College – brochures for its courses which will start in July and September. If you're an Excelsior student, or are thinking of taking courses from Excelsior, drop by the Education Center to pick up a brochure.

California State University, Dominguez Hills – info about an on-line Sport & Fitness Psychology undergraduate certificate program. This certificate consists of five 3-semester credit courses (\$189/credit). For more information, go to <http://www.csudh.edu/sportpsychology/>. This certificate is aimed at coaches, athletes, trainers, fitness instructors, and health professionals. The program is “designed to increase knowledge of this developing field, to enhance employability of participants and to advance the careers of those currently employed in sport and fitness occupations.”

Parents, This is for You

Do your children eat up a full week's worth of snacks in two days, then moan and beg for more during the week? Or do they seem always to want clothes, toys, games, whatever they've seen on TV without considering how you're going to pay for them? Are you looking for ways to help your children learn the value of money? Check out a web site called “The Mint” (<http://www.themint.org/index.html>). “The site provides tools to help parents as well as educators teach children to manage money wisely and develop good financial habits: the building blocks for a secure future. Given the current rate of savings and debt in America, this is a lesson that desperately needs to be learned.”

And if you're looking for help in understanding your child and encouraging his/her physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development, check out The Parent's Journal (<http://www.parentsjournal.com/>). This web site comes out of “a weekly national radio series for parents, care-givers, educators, and others who care for children [of all ages]. . . . This is not a program that dispenses “quick-fix” solutions, or one-size-fits-all parenting advice, but rather a program that is designed to help parents understand their own individual child, and encourage that child's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development.”

Programs cover parenting issues such as

- childhood sleep problems,
- temper tantrums,
- sibling squabbles,
- friendship skills,
- setting limits,
- childcare,
- homework hassles, and
- many others.

The contents of each program are listed on the web site and you can download broadcasts as podcasts.

What Education Benefits are Available to My dependents?

While there are few monetary benefits available to spouses of military personnel through the Coast Guard, many other educational services are available. You can find info about services, programs, and benefits and links to more info at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dependents.asp>.

CG Transcript and Degree Plans

The "Coast Guard Education Center" web site, where unofficial transcripts and degree plans from education assessments have been posted for a long time, is no longer in service.

Instead of getting your unofficial transcript and degree plans there, your ESO will receive them and forward them to you. And if you requested an education assessment, degree plans, or both from the Coast Guard Institute more than a month ago and didn't download them at the time, don't despair. Just ask your ESO to re-open the TACCTS case used to submit your original assessment request and request copies of your transcript, degree plans, or both.

If you submitted a request to the Coast Guard Institute for an education assessment in the last couple of months, please be patient. Due to an unexpectedly large number of requests, the processing time for assessment requests is currently 4 to 5 weeks.

If you've received your unofficial transcript and want an official transcript sent to a college, submit a request (form CGI-1564, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1564.pdf>) directly to the Institute via the e-mail address near the bottom of the form.

REMEMBER: You can't get a transcript sent to a school unless you've first requested an education assessment. For more on this process, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step5.asp>.

GED Preparation, English as a Second Language, Adult Secondary Education Courses

If you live in Cape May or Atlantic County and have a spouse or child interested in improving his/her English language skills, getting a high school equivalency certificate, or taking adult secondary education courses check out http://www.learntrainwork.com/pdf_files/literacy_Directory.pdf for a list of the many places both of these are offered. GED testing is also available. And all this is free to NJ residents. (Military personnel stationed in NJ and their dependents are considered NJ residents for educational purposes.)

Deciding Whether to Switch GI Bill Programs

If you declined to enroll in the MGIB-AD (either long ago when you had the option to switch from VEAP to the MGIB-AD or while you were in boot camp), this is an easy decision. You should absolutely apply for the new GI Bill. You do this via VA form 22-1990 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/VA22-1990.pdf>) or the VA's on-line version of the same form (<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>).

You'll be able to use the benefits included in the new GI Bill starting on 01 August either for yourself or (once rules are finalized) transfer all or some of your benefit to a dependent.

If you didn't decline to enroll in the MGIB-AD (and have paid all or some of the twelve monthly \$100 payments) or if you're a Reservist enrolled in the MGIB-SR or REAP, here are some things to consider before making that irrevocable election.

- Will the school I'm interested in waive tuition and fees because I'm a veteran?
- What percentage of new GI Bill benefits am I entitled to?
- How much will I spend on rent and books?
- What's the E-5 BAH rate for the Zip code my school's in?
- How many credits am I going to be taking per term?
- What's the current MGIB-AD monthly rate?
- Will I be eligible for tuition assistance?

- Did I contribute to the Buy-up option?
- How much will each benefit pay?

Use the worksheet LCDR Tim Castle (ISC New Orleans) and I created to roughly calculate your benefits under the new GI Bill, the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, REAP, and tuition assistance (with Top-up). You can find the worksheet at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/GIBillDecisionWorksheet.xls>.

Save Your TA Authorizations!!

When you receive a tuition assistance authorization by e-mail, don't just print it out and delete the e-mail. Make sure you also download it to your computer or a CD-ROM.

Why? Although the TA system works well, occasionally you may run into problems related to providing grade reports or repaying TA the Coast Guard spent on a course you took. If you don't have the information that's available on your TA authorization, you'll need to get a replacement copy of it from the Coast Guard Institute. The less often you need to ask an Institute staff person for a favor, the more likely he or she will be to help you out when you do ask for one. This goes for resolving problems like those described above.

By saving all documents related to your education to and from your school, the Coast Guard Institute, your ESO, you'll be able to reconstruct events if you ever have a dispute.

Also, changes may occur (e.g., tuition changed, a course you thought you'd be taking wasn't available, the course dates you listed were wrong, etc.) that require you to make changes to your authorization. If you have it available, you can tell your ESO what exactly needs to be changed or deleted from it. This saves everyone time and aggravation.

ACCC Summer and Fall Course Guides

If you're taking courses at Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) and want to get a jump on things by submitting TA requests early, the course guides for both summer and fall courses are now available.

You can pick them up

- just inside the outer doors at the Exchange,
- in the Lab waiting area in the Health Services building, and
- just outside the Education & Career Development Center in the Command & Mission Support building.

I try to keep the display racks full, but if you don't find a rack empty please let me know so I can restock it.

SOC Agreements

Are you getting your degree from a SOCCOAST school? If so, and if you've completed six credits, you should ask the school for a SOC agreement. This evaluation of completed and remaining degree requirements serves as a contract between the school and you and remains in effect even after you leave the Coast Guard.

With a SOC agreement in place, the school can change its graduation requirements and you won't have to worry about having to take courses to meet the new requirements.

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

First Come, First Served

If you'd like a free 8" x 11" spiral-bound notebook (great for school, office, or around the house), stop by the Education Center. They're in a box just inside the door.

Coastline Students: One More Week!

Coastline Community College (<http://military.coastline.edu>) will be changing its requirements for some degrees this summer. If you want to lock in the courses you're required to take for your chosen major, you'll need to apply for an official SOC evaluation and agreement by 09 June 2009, if you haven't already done so.

If you have an official SOC agreements before 09 June, you won't have to take additional courses, if any the course requirements for your major change. **Getting a SOC agreement could save you from having to take courses you didn't plan to take.**

To get an official evaluation, go to <http://military.coastline.edu> and click on the applicable Coast Guard link. Then, scroll down to "SOC Evaluation Request" and follow directions there. You'll find information on how to get your Coast Guard Institute transcript sent directly to Coastline's Military office. If you have college credit from other institutions, you'll have to order official transcripts to be sent directly to Coastline by those colleges/universities. **DON'T DELAY!!**

ACE Transfer Credit Guide

The American Council on Education (ACE) has just published a guide to help you understand your military transcript and ACE credit recommendations. You can find and download this 46-page booklet at http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/Transfer_Guide.htm.

Licensing and Certification Test Reimbursement

Having a license or certification can open doors for you in today's job market. Many professions require a license or certification. If you're eligible for Montgomery GI Bill education benefits (MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP), you can receive up to \$2,000 per test for various licensing and certification tests. To find out if the test you want to take is one of those which qualifies for reimbursement, go "Search for Approved License and Certification Programs" on the VA's web site (http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/search_programs.htm).

MGIB reimbursement is also available for many on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs. Again, see the VA's web site to see if your program qualifies.

The new GI Bill will reimburse you up to \$2,000 for one test.

Tuition Assistance & Grade Reports

If you're using tuition assistance (TA) to take college courses, remember that you **must** provide the grade report for your courses to the Coast Guard Institute within 60 days of the end of the course. If you don't, you'll receive a series of

nastygrams from the Navy (which is the Coast Guard's agent for paying TA to schools) demanding reimbursement for the courses you used TA to pay for.

To avoid this, provide a copy of your grade report (with your full name and SSN on it) to your ESO. Your ESO will then submit it (usually via e-mail) to the Institute. If you're unable to put your SSN on it (e.g., if you print it to a PDF file from your computer screen), provide it to your ESO.

If at all possible (so what the Institute sees is legible), print your on-line grade report to a PDF file. If you're not sure how to do this, here's the process.

- (1) Get the grade report on your computer screen.
- (2) Select "File" and "Print" (or press CTRL and P at the same time)
- (3) Select "Adobe PDF"
- (4) Click on "Preferences"
- (5) Click "Layout" tab
- (6) Select "Landscape"
- (7) Click "OK"
- (8) Click on "Print"
- (9) Click "Save" after deciding where you want to save the file
- (10) Attach the PDF document you just created to an e-mail and send it to me.

And if possible, please include in your e-mail the number of the TA authorization which corresponds to the grade report. The TA authorization number is in the upper right corner of your authorization (CGI_____).

Deploying?

If you know you're going to be deploying for some length of time – whether to the Persian Gulf or somewhere here at home – and want to use tuition assistance (TA) to pay for a college course, submit your TA request to your ESO as soon as possible.

The Coast Guard Institute will accept TA requests up to three months before a course begins. But your ESO may be willing to accept them at any time, and then submit them to the Institute as soon as that three-month window opens.

Don't wait until a few days before you're due to sail to submit your TA request. Even if it comes back quickly, if you don't have Internet connectivity you won't be able to download the TA authorization and may not be able to get it to your school by its deadline. The bottom line is: PLAN AHEAD!

Leaving the Coast Guard?

If you're leaving the Coast Guard within the next twelve months (whether through retirement, resignation, or expiration of your enlistment), you should be making plans for what you'll be doing after you take off your uniform for the last time. Check out the information on my web site related to career transition (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/careertrans.asp>).

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one later.

If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

And don't discount the idea of working in the public sector. Not only are there thousands of jobs in the federal government, identical to private-sector jobs in which you can put your skills, knowledge, and experience to use while maintaining job security unavailable in the private sector (<http://www.fedjobs.gov/>), governmental entities at all levels – state, county, municipality, school district, port district, etc. – provide similar benefits.

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

One more thing: the new campus's classrooms, labs, and library are all state-of-the-art. Even if you're not ready to register for classes right away, you should take the opportunity to visit the campus and look around. The Director of Academic and Student Services has extended a personal invitation to anyone who'd like to use the library to study, for research, or for pleasure reading. It's very quiet, well-lit, and has very comfortable furniture.