

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #277

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### Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
BM3 Meredith Cupak	TraCen (Seamanship)	BM2
SN Karen Scott	TraCen (Gym)	E-PME-4*
SNET Conner Moriarty	LSU	E-PME-4
DCC Shawn Garry	TraCen (Recruit Trng)	E-PME-8*
HS2 Scott Fabian	HSWL FO Cape May	HS1*
HS3 Corey Harris	HSWL FO Cape May	HS2*

\* First time taking test

Well done, all 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

**Q:** Can I use tuition assistance and the GI Bill at the same time?

**A:** Yes and no. If you're asking if you can use tuition assistance (TA) to pay for your courses and get GI Bill payments for those same courses, the answer is “no”.

However, let's say you're taking five courses of three credits each. You could use TA to pay for four of those courses and pay for the fifth course yourself. Then, when you go to your school's GI Bill representative to get the school to verify the number of credits you're taking, you can tell the advise him/her that you're only taking one course (3 credits) using the GI Bill. **Make sure** the GI Bill rep understands that you can't claim all 15 credits for GI Bill purposes.

If you're using any of the MGIB programs you'll then receive a monthly payment from the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the lowest monthly amount. For the MGIB-AD, that would be \$342/month; for the MGIB-SR, you'd receive \$83.25/month. And if you're using REAP, the amount you'd receive would be a percentage of the MGIB-AD rate, based on the number of months you served on active duty in support of a contingency operation after 10SEP2001.

With respect to the new GI Bill, your school will be paid directly for the course you're **not** funding with TA. You will not be eligible for the housing allowance because you're not taking more than 6 credits for GI Bill purposes. You will receive a small book stipend equal to \$41.67 times the number of credits you're taking (3 times what's called the "rate of pursuit". (The rate of pursuit is equal to the number of credits you're taking divided by the number of credits considered full-time.) In this case, your rate of pursuit would be 3/12 so your book stipend for that term would be \$31.25.

Finally, although this doesn't answer the exact question you asked, if you're eligible for the MGIB-AD or the new GI Bill, you can use what's called "Top-up". Under this option, you can use TA to pay for all your courses and eligible fees, the use your GI Bill to cover all costs paid to the school that weren't covered by TA.

## Frequently-Confused Words

The English language includes hundreds of words people are unsure which to use. Over the next several weeks, I'll highlight many of them here. Today: **compliment** and **complement**.

The word **compliment** can be a noun or a verb, depending on how it's used. As a noun, it's an expression of esteem, respect, affection, or admiration; a flattering remark. As a verb, it means to express esteem, respect, affection, or admiration. "Using the invention was the highest compliment someone could pay the inventor" and "The CO complimented the seaman on her uniform at the personnel inspection."

The word **complement** is a noun, in ordinary usage, meaning something that fills up, completes, or makes perfect OR two angles whose sum is 90 degrees. It can also mean the whole body or number of personnel assigned to a ship. Examples: "The husband thought of his wife as his complement"; "The corporation's last purchase was the Ajax Company, which it considered the complement to all its other acquisitions"; "Angles of 35 degrees and 65 degrees are complementary, in that they add up to 90 degrees"; "The aircraft carrier's complement was 5,285 sailors and officers, not counting its air wing."

## HS Requirements for May 2010 Servicewide Exams

Despite the fact that it was published in April 2009, there still seems to be quite a bit of confusion as to what HS personnel have to do to qualify for the May SWEs. Paragraph 2 of ALCOAST 246/09 (dated 27 April 2009) is very clear:

"The revised HS1 course (0130-4) and HS2 course (0230-4) will be required for SWE and advancement eligibility effective 01FEB10. Older HS1 and HS2 end-of-course test (EOCT) completions will remain valid until 01AUG09. The last day the older HS1 (0130-3) and HS2 (0230-3) EOCTs will be administered is 01AUG09. The HS EPQ form CG-3303C-HS (rev. 05-2008) must be signed and verified on page two prior to taking any rate training end-of-course test (EOCT)."

Essentially, any HS3 or HS2 who wants to take the HS2 or HS1 SWE in May 2010 has to have passed the current version of the EOCT (0130-4 for HS1, 0230-4 for HS2) on or before 01 February 2010. And to be eligible to take the EOCT, the would-be examinee must first have completed the latest version of the HS EPQs.

If an HS3's or HS2's PDE doesn't reflect that s/he passed the required EOCT, no SWE will be sent to his/her examination board.

## CG Exchange System Scholarships

Applicants are being solicited for the CG Exchange System Scholarship Program. One \$1,500, one \$750, and one \$500 scholarship are available for students who are dependents of Coast Guard personnel (regular and Reserve military, retired military, current civilian NAF and appropriated-funds employees, uniformed PHS personnel, and Auxiliarists.) **The application deadline is 27 February 2010.**

See ALCGPSD 059/09 for details on eligibility criteria and application procedures.

## How Do I Pick a School Without CG Institute Degree Plans?

As you may have heard, the Coast Guard Institute stopped providing degree plans in mid-December 2009. Those who made well-reasoned requests for degree plans received four plans showing how many credits they currently had were likely to be accepted toward specific degrees and majors and four different schools. This was useful in that it helped satisfy most people's desire to get a degree as quickly as possible.

Now that the Institute isn't providing degree plans, however, you'll need to put a lot more thought into your choice and do more work to find schools that meet your requirements. If you follow a linear process, however, this process can be manageable.

**Step 1: Figure out what you want a degree for.** To do this, you'll first need to decide what kind of work you want to do once you leave the Coast Guard. Keep in mind that to be successful in many fields you don't have to have a degree. For example, does an interior designer need to have a degree? Or a master welder? Or a home health care worker? I don't know the answers to these questions. The point is, work backwards from your goal (type of work you want to do > education/training requirements to do that kind of work > schools which provide that kind of training/education). This is much more productive than picking a major and degree and hoping it will help you get the kind of work you want to do or, conversely, that your preferred employer will find it useful.

How do you do this? An underused tool is the federal Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>). This on-line publication lists hundreds and hundreds of job titles and much useful information about each. For each job title, there's a separate article. Articles are organized similarly, so you can easily compare similar jobs with different titles. Articles include the following sections:

- Nature of the work
- Training, other qualifications, and advancement
- Employment (how many people are doing this job today?)
- Job outlook & projections (are there going to be more or fewer of these jobs in the future?)
- Earnings & wages (today and in the future)
- Related occupations
- Sources of additional information

The section on training includes education and should answer general questions about the type and amount of training and/or education employers want people who do the job to have.

**Step 2:** Once you've determined that you'll need a degree (and what to major in), your next step is to find a school that provides that degree in that major. You can find a lot of information that will help you find the college/university that best fits your needs and desires on my web site and links included there:

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/step4.asp>, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp>, and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp>. At the bottom of the page on the "Selected Schools" page (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp>) you'll find a list of search engines you can use to find schools that meet your criteria.

**Step 3:** Go to the web sites of colleges you identified via Step 2 above. Be organized. You can use the college comparison worksheet from my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf>) or make up your own. The point is that you need to find out the same info about each school on your list so you're not trying to compare apples with oranges with pears with plums. Once you've settled on a couple of schools, find a way to contact a counselor at each and ask what you need to do/provide to get a degree plan.

**Step 4:** While waiting for the schools to answer (or before you do any of this, if you want) submit a request for an education assessment to the Coast Guard Institute using the "Application for Voluntary Education Services" (form CGI-1561, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1561.pdf>). Before you submit this form to your ESO, make sure you ensure all courses you've taken in the Coast Guard than can be put into DirectAccess *are in* DirectAccess. **Read the instructions on the last page of the form!!!** The Institute's staff will prepare a transcript showing how many college credits your Coast Guard training would be worth if you'd learned the same material in college.

**Step 5:** Once you've received responses from the schools that interested you, submit an "Official USCG Transcript Request" form (CGI-1564, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CGI1564.pdf>) to the Coast Guard Institute, one form for each school. When the Institute receives this form, it will send a copy of the transcript it prepared (see Step 4)

sent to each school you're interested in. From this transcript (plus any college/university and/or DoD service transcripts you'll also need to send to the school) the counselor will create a degree plan for you. This degree plan will list all courses

- needed to complete your desired degree,
- the school will be considered completed (based on credit transferred from elsewhere), and
- you still need to complete to earn your degree.

## Occupational Certification & Apprenticeship Programs

A number of occupational certification programs are available through your ESO. The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP - <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>) is a program that allows active duty servicemembers to earn apprenticeship certification in 125 skills learned through work experience and related technical instruction. All you have to do is document the experience you gain while performing your regular military duties; no after-hours work is required.

You can also get certified in dozens of different occupational fields ([http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes\\_web/certification/deph/pt3/index.htm](http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/certification/deph/pt3/index.htm)) through a large number of nationally-recognized certification organizations. You can get certified as a broadcast engineer, crane operator, automotive service professional, dental assistant, contract manager, medical technologist, administrative professional, personal trainer, industrial security professional, safety professional, or any of many other specialties. And if you're eligible for GI Bill benefits, you can likely get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for the cost of each certification exam.

You can also renew or get your initial EMT certification through the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians ([http://www.nremt.org/about/nremt\\_news.asp](http://www.nremt.org/about/nremt_news.asp)).

## 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.

## Studying for a CLEP Math or English Test (or ASVAB)?

If you're preparing to take the CLEP College Mathematics or English Composition test, or if you're trying to improve your ASVAB AR, MK, PC, or WK scores, a free on-line study aid is now available to all Coast Guard personnel.

Although it was designed to help people who don't feel quite ready to take college-level courses, Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) emphasizes subject areas also tested in numerous CLEP tests, DSSTs, and the ASVAB. It diagnoses your "current level of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and math abilities and teaches the concepts and skills needed to increase proficiency in each of these academic areas." Through OASC you have access – via any computer at any time of day – to dozens of lessons and quizzes.

- Pre-tests help you evaluate strengths and weaknesses in each subject area and design customized lessons.
- There are interactive games, lessons, and flashcards as well as practice sets and quizzes.
- There's a post-test to measure end-of-course performance.
- It's self-paced.
- There are different course lengths to fit any schedule and accommodate any time constraints you're under.

In the verbal section are lessons ranging from "Building Your Vocabulary" to "Understanding Difficult Text" to "Understanding the Author's Tone". In the math section are lessons such as "Eliminating Wrong Answers", "Multiplying and Dividing Fractions", and "Percent Increase and Decrease". In addition, there are lessons on "Dealing with Studying Stress", "Wrapping up Your Studying", "Reviewing Math", and "Reviewing Verbal".

And OASC is available to both Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian) and dependents of servicemembers. Check it out at <http://www.petersons.com/dantes/>.

## Coast Guard Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Institute is once again accepting applications for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grants and Vander Putten Education Grants programs.

All applications must be dated with the current (2010) date. Recycled applications with a date from last year will not be accepted. HOWEVER, you can clear the original date, re-date the application, and re-submit it.

Receipts must not be dated more than a year before the date the Institute receives the application. That is, if your application reaches the Institute on 20 January 2010, receipts can't be dated before 20 January 2009. Also, receipts must include a description of the item purchased and must show proof of payment. Copies of receipts must be legible and if you send original receipts, they will not be returned.

## Military Times Edge

The current issue of *Edge*, from the publisher of *Navy Times* is available in the Education Center and the Work-Life Offices for anyone who wants a copy. The articles in the current issue are:

- Recipe for Success: retired soldier transforms hobby into fruitful business
- Hook some Help: supplement Uncle Sam with these military-only scholarships
- The Job Searchers: Hiring help on your hunt for a new career
- One Year to a New Career: 12 thing you can do in 2010 to find a job you love
- Unfit for Command: How to deal with a bad military boss
- Five Golden Skills: Every employer wants them – here's how to get them
- A Head for Business
- And more ...

## Beware of “Military Friendly” Schools

You’ve decided it’s time to start working toward a college degree. Your first question is likely to be: “What school should I get my degree from?” Answering this question is likely to be one of the most difficult parts of the college experience – even harder than some courses you’ll take. There are, literally, hundreds of degree-granting institutions in the U.S. How do you find the few that offer what you’re looking for and provide a degree that’s worth having?

First, figure out what you’re looking for. Do you need to sit in class to learn a subject or are you OK with distance learning? (Distance learning courses are those taught other than face-to-face in a classroom setting. See <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp#type> for descriptions of different types of distance learning.) Are future employers likely to reject you because the school you got your degree from wasn’t rigorous enough? Download the “College Comparison Worksheet” (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf>) to get an idea of things to think about.

Although “Choosing a Distance-Learning School” (at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp>) is aimed at people interested in distance learning courses, the items other than course-delivery method good things to consider for any school.

Don’t jump at a school just because it calls itself “military friendly”. This term has become little more than a marketing tool. And there’s no single definition of what the term means. It could mean all courses are offered via distance learning, that academic terms are short, that courses require few prerequisites, that the school accepts transfer credits from virtually any source or courses you barely passed.

All these things sound good to students. But if you’re getting a degree so you’ll be more marketable when you leave the Coast Guard, put yourself in your potential employer’s shoes. If you were looking at an application from someone who got a degree from XYZ University, would you be impressed? Would you feel comfortable hiring someone knowing the courses she took were easy or only lasted five weeks or that she only had to take five courses to earn a bachelor’s degree?

Even though you can get a degree quickly, that degree may not be considered by employers to be of high enough quality. Check out this article ([http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/20091230\\_GI\\_Bill\\_of\\_Goods.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/20091230_GI_Bill_of_Goods.pdf)) from the 30 December 2009 issue of *BusinessWeek*.

## Vocational Courses & Financial Aid

As you know, the Coast Guard’s tuition assistance (TA) program only funds courses which meet two general criteria: (1) offered by nationally- or regionally-accredited institutions and (2) result in credit you can transfer to another nationally- or regionally-accredited institution. Generally, this means TA can’t be used for vocational courses and programs.

However, if you’re a member of the regular Coast Guard, didn’t turn down the Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty) in boot camp, and had \$1,200 deducted from your pay (or if you’re a Reservist) you can use your MGIB benefits for practically any vocational course or program. (To find out for sure if the course you want to take is eligible for GI Bill reimbursement, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-o.asp#saa>.)

And if you decided the new GI Bill was for you and gave up either the MGIB-AD or MGIB-SR to get it, you can use it for the same courses you could have used MGIB benefits for. If you didn’t give up MGIB benefits before electing the new GI Bill, you’ll only be able to use it for courses offered at institutions of higher learning (IHLs). Generally, IHLs are accredited degree-granting institutions, which seldom offer vocational courses.

## SkillSoft: Free On-line Courses, Hundreds of Subjects

Are you interested in learning to better use the programs that are part of Windows Office 2007 (e.g., Word, Excel, etc.)? Would you like to improve your customer service, communications, or leadership skills? How about project management or strategic planning?

Courses on these and hundreds more subjects are available **FREE** through Skillsoft (via the Coast Guard Learning Portal (<https://learning.uscg.mil/>)). Once you've logged in, just click on "Skillsoft" and then "Catalog" to see the hundreds of free courses available to you and your dependents.

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.

## TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800\*): EOCTs and AQEs

Thursdays (0745): colleges tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs\*\*

\* If you need longer than two hours to take an untimed test, it will be provided.

\*\* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT or AQE on a Tuesday morning, you can take it on a Thursday morning.

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays available for counseling, AFCT tests, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, Mondays are also open for things.

(Thursday afternoons I give a presentation to Reserve recruits on tuition assistance and the four GI Bill programs.)

If you call and I don't answer the phone, I'm usually administering a test (and, because of the noise, can't talk on the phone) or otherwise busy with someone in the office. E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me.

## Thinking of Teaching?

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Troops to Teachers also 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](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](http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp).

## 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.

## Quick Reference Study Guides

The TraCen Education Center also 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>.

## Education Library

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) for each rating.

The Education Center also has dozens of brochures and books on college, financial aid, the officer program application process, and other things. If there are multiple copies, you're welcome to take one.

## Get It in Writing!

A recent article on military.com by retired Coast Guard Chief Terry Howell (<http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html>) provides extremely good advice about how to avoid making costly mistakes when dealing with the VA about your education benefits.

The advice is equally applicable to dealing with *any* government or corporate bureaucracy, for that matter.