

TraCen Cape May Education Update #298

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Congratulations!!

The following personnel in the Cape May area passed Coast Guard Institute end-of-course, AQEs, and other tests since the last update:

Name	Work Site	Test
SN Gerard Wynne	ANT Cape May	E-PME-4
YN3 Mary Hoy	TraCen (Recruit SPO)	YN2

Also of note, LTJG Daniel LiBrando (at PSC in Arlington, VA) just completed a master's degree in international diplomacy from Norwich University in Vermont.

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: I want to take college courses and have heard that the Coast Guard will pay for almost any type of course I want to take. Is this correct?

A: With a few conditions, yes. The two main criteria for determining if the Coast Guard (tuition assistance or TA) will pay for a course: (1) the course has to be offered by an institution that's either nationally or regionally accredited and (2) the credits you earn for the course have to be transferable to another nationally- or regionally-accredited institution.

There are lots of other conditions, however. See the Performance, Training, & Education Manual (Chapter 11.H.2.e.) Actually, there are three criteria. The third is that the course has to be related to the degree you're pursuing. That means that you can't take a Kayaking 101 course just because you want to, one's available from an accredited

school, and you can earn transferable credit from it. If the recreational course isn't required as part of the degree program, you can't use TA to pay for it.

So if you were in a recreation (or similar) degree program, the kayaking course could very well be covered by TA. But if you were in an engineering or emergency management or history degree program and wanted to take the kayaking course to fill out your electives, it wouldn't be covered by TA.

Something else to remember: if taking one or more college courses would likely interfere with your Coast Guard duties, your command may restrict your use of TA, prohibit you from taking college courses altogether, or limit you to a certain number of courses at a time. For example, if you're a non-rate who just reported from boot camp, your command can require you to finish all watchstanding quals and your E-PME-4 test before it will give you the OK to use TA.

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.

Frequently-Confused/Misused Word Pairs

The English language includes hundreds of word pairs which leave people unsure as to which they should use in a given situation. Today, the pair in focus is **to** vs. **too**.

In most cases, the word **to** is a preposition used to indicate a number of things: movement or action toward a place, person, or thing ("He drove to the Admin Building"; "She went back to her original idea"); direction ("The go fast boat was a mile to the south of the 210", "She turned her back to the door"); contact or proximity ("She applied polish to the hood of his car", "He stood with his hands to his eyes"); etc.

Too is an adverb with a few different meanings: *besides* or *also* ("He sold his house and his car, too") and *to an excessive degree* ("The house was too large for us").

If there are any words you often mix up, please e-mail them to me at andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil.

Striker Program Suspension Suspended

On 26 May 2010 (ALCOAST 270/10), CG-1 announced that "Effective 01 July 2010, the striker advancement lists for the BM, DC, EM, MK, SK and YN ratings will be closed until further notice."

But on 25 June (ALCOAST 333/10), CG-1 modified this: "Due to our response to Operation Deepwater Horizon, the implementation date announced in [ALCOAST 270/10] is hereby changed to 01 January 2011 vice 01 July 2010 to allow all members, especially those impacted by Operation Deepwater Horizon, to complete the striker program." This announcement was repeated three days later in ALCGENL 102/10.

Tuition Assistance & Grade Reports

After you've completed a course paid for with tuition assistance (TA), remember that to avoid a nastygram from the Navy, you must submit a grade report for that course to your ESO at most 42 days after the end date listed on your authorization. It's your responsibility – not your school's – to provide this grade report.

If at all possible, please send your grade report, rather than your transcript. We're interested in seeing only the grades you earned for the courses listed on your authorization, not all grades earned at a particular college or university.

The grade report you send to your ESO must include your employee ID number or SSN, either on the grade report itself or in the text of the e-mail you use to send it to your ESO.

Turn Your ICS/IS Courses Into College Credit

Frederick Community College (FCC) in Frederick, MD will award college credit for many FEMA courses (including ICS-100, 200, 700, and 800) taken through its Emergency Management Institute (<http://training.fema.gov/IS/>). These credits are applicable to FCC's Associate of Applied Sciences degree in Emergency Management or may be transferred to other schools.

For more information, go to http://www.frederick.edu/courses_and_programs/degree_emergency_management.aspx.

CG Foundation Grants & Foreign Language Software

The Coast Guard Foundation is once again reimbursing eligible personnel for the cost of foreign language software such as Tell Me More (<http://www.tellmemore.com/>) and Rosetta Stone (<http://www.rosettastone.com/>).

For information on CG Foundation grants and the application process, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#cgf>.

Coast Guard Institute Goes Green

To save resources (hundreds of reams of paper, scores of boxes of envelopes, and thousands of dollars in postage – not to mention hundreds of staff hours), the Coast Guard Institute recently stopped sending out paper results letters for EOCTs and AQEs.

You will continue to receive your unofficial results by e-mail immediately after taking the test. However, once your results have been verified, you'll receive another e-mail, which will be equivalent to the hard copy results letter that was eliminated. Your official results will continue to be posted to DirectAccess within two work days after your test has been scored and the score verified.

Although DirectAccess is a secure repository for your test results, it can't hurt for you to keep the official results e-mail as a back-up in an Outlook folder set aside for just such info.

Reservists, TA, and the GI Bill

Reservists often ask about receiving GI Bill benefits and using tuition assistance (TA) at the same time, as well as other related questions. There are a number of rules, but they're relatively straightforward.

- If you're eligible for TA (i.e., haven't used up your annual \$4,500 allowance) and are taking fewer than 6 credits in a term you must use TA rather than MGIB-SR benefits. [10 U.S. Code §16131] (This assumes the college/university defines "full-time" as 12 credits per term.) This rule does not apply to Reservists filing for REAP or MGIB-AD benefits.
- If you're **not** on active duty and are eligible for TA and REAP, you may receive both benefits for the same course(s). The total amount of TA and REAP paid for the course (whether to you or to the school) may not exceed the total cost of the course. [ALCOAST 045/06]
- If you're on active duty and are eligible for TA and REAP, you may use TA or receive REAP benefits, but may not receive both benefits for the same course(s). [ALCOAST 045/06]
- If you're going to submit a REAP claim for a course, the amount of TA your school will receive will be the difference between the total cost of the course and the amount of REAP payments you receive during the school term. That is, the total benefit you and/or your school receive (TA & REAP) can't exceed the total cost of the course. In no case may the amount of TA paid to the school exceed the maximum per-credit amount it would receive if you weren't submitting a REAP claim. [ALCOAST 258/06]

- You may **not** receive GI Bill benefits (MGIB-SR or MGIB-AD) for courses paid for by TA. [Art. 11.H.2.e.11., *Performance, Training, & Education Manual*, COMDTINST M1500.10C]
- You may receive GI Bill benefits (MGIB-SR, REAP, or MGIB-AD) for some courses and use TA to pay for other courses you're taking during the same term whether you're taking them at the same school or at different schools.

What Happens After I Submit My TA Application?

After you submit an application for TA using the on-line eTA system, you'll receive an e-mail from the Navy (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/TAAe-mail.pdf>). (The Navy is the Coast Guard's agent for processing TA applications, distributing authorizations, and paying schools.)

In that e-mail, you'll see a link to a web site. Once you've opened that web site and logged in, follow the steps listed in the e-mail.

Don't just print out your authorization and forget about it. Download it to your computer, so if anything happens in the future that makes it necessary to refer to your authorization, you'll have it.

Once you've downloaded it (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/TAexample.pdf>), open the file and check it over for accuracy. If **anything** is incorrect (including dates, course information, etc.), report it to your ESO by e-mail. Your ESO will submit a request to the Coast Guard Institute to correct your authorization. The Institute will generate a corrected authorization and e-mail it directly to you.

Once you've verified that everything's accurate, print it out and take the authorization to your school's bursar or whomever students go to to pay for courses. Verify with that person that you're registered for all courses listed on your authorization and that they're available. If they are, write your SSN in the space provided on the authorization, sign it on the signature line, and hand it to the bursar. The school will credit the amount shown at the bottom of the "GOV SHARE" column on your authorization to your account. You'll be responsible for paying all other costs.

Finally, once you've completed your course(s), you'll have to provide a copy of your grade report to your ESO (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/ta.asp#grades>). If you don't provide a grade report for each course listed on your authorization, the cost of the TA spent on those courses will be deducted from your pay.

Avoid Taking Out Student Loans!

There's very little reason to take out student loans when so much money is available from scholarships. TraCen's Education Center has a few copies of a hardback book – *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents* – which lists dozens, if not hundreds, of scholarships, fellowships/grants, grants-in-aid, and awards available to you or your dependents. There are only a couple more of these books available, first come, first served.

When using this book, remember: there are thousands of scholarships that aren't listed in it which you or your son/daughter may qualify for. Leave no stone unturned when looking for scholarships. The Education Center has a number of other references you can use to find scholarships and grants.

Attention, Parents of College-Bound Children!

- The U.S. Department of Education has produced a really excellent booklet (*College Preparation Checklist*) people at all stages in life. The first section ("Money for College") covers student aid; the second section ("Your 'To Do' List") provides check-off lists for elementary, junior high/middle, high school students and their parents and for adult students. You can stop by the Education Center to pick up a copy, or download this pub from http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/College_Prep_Checklist.pdf. The DoEd's web site has many other useful pubs which you can download. Check 'em out: (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALWebApp/students/english/publications.jsp>).

- If you're looking for a financial aid (including scholarship) search engine that won't try to steer you toward specific loans or scholarships, check out the Department of Education's various wizards:
https://studentaid2.ed.gov/getmoney/scholarship/scholarship_search_select.asp?13817/.

- So you've decided you want to take college courses, but you're not sure which school's right for you. Or you've already decided on college but made your choice more by gut feeling or based on others' recommendations than through deliberate process. In either case, check out the Department of Education's College Matching Wizard.

There are two versions. One is for people who already have an idea what kind of college they would like to attend. The other asks more questions so as to provide you with a more tailored college fit. You can find them both at https://studentaid2.ed.gov/gotocollege/collegefinder/wizard_intro1.asp.

- The Scholarship and Financial Aid Explorer (SFEX) was developed by the Marine Corps to make it easier for military personnel to find scholarships directly relevant to them and their dependents. SFEX provides a listing of over 600 scholarships and is open to all servicemembers at no cost. You can check it out at <http://www.mcsfex.net/Default.aspx>.

Servicewide Exam Deadlines Closer Than You Think

Remember that the deadline for Coast Guard regulars to complete *all* qualifications for the servicewide exams (SWEs) is 01 August 2010.

CG Foundation & Vander Putten Grants

Many recipients of grants under the Coast Guard Foundation and Vander Putten grant programs are unaware that the money they receive is a generous gift of individuals who contribute their own money to fund the programs. Many tens of thousands of dollars of their own money.

That is, when you apply for one of these grants, there is no guarantee that there will be money available to fund it and you shouldn't expect there will be. Moreover, common courtesy dictates that when you receive one of these grants you should thank those who made it possible. You can easily send a quick thank-you note via the Coast Guard Institute's web site (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/tag/fg_feedback.asp).

Those who contribute to these grant programs are truly interested in knowing if the money you receive made a difference to you and, specifically, how it made a difference. Without feedback, they may assume it's not all that helpful or (worse) that it's going to people who are ungrateful. Take five minutes to send some feedback.

Free College Reference Books

The following books are available in limited quantities in the Education Center:

- *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Dependents (2008-2010)*
- *Guide to Online Learning*
- *College Majors That Work*

Also available, are the following:

- *Need a Liff?* (this is the American Legion's guide to educational opportunities, scholarships, grants, student loans, careers, and employment)
- *DANTES College Career Workbook*
- *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*
- *College.edu – Online resources for the cyber-savvy student*
- *Don't Miss Out – the ambitious student's guide to financial aid*
- *Best Career and Education Web sites: A Quick Guide to Online Job Search*

If any or all of these interest you, drop by and pick one up – first come, first served.

Is Distance Learning for You?

The University of Georgia has come up with an on-line assessment tool you can use to determine if computer-based distance learning is for you. It's called SORT (Student Online Readiness Tool, <http://www.alt.usg.edu/sort/html/sortlau1.html>) and is based on research that says there are "six main topics closely related to a student's success in the online learning environment". These are, Experience with Technology, Access to Technology, Study Habits, Lifestyle, Goals and Purposes, and Learning Preferences. "Each section of SORT has a brief description followed by a questionnaire. Based on your responses to questions, feedback is provided on your personal readiness profile, along with suggested strategies for success and links to more information."

Wondering What to Major In?

Are you interested in getting a college degree, but unsure about what to major in? Drop by the Education Center and pick up a copy of *College Majors that Work*. This book has an excellent, easy-to-follow system for determining what major best matches your interests.

You should also check out chapters 3 ("Career Exploration Information") and 5 ("Researching Employer and Labor Market Information") of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Before you dive into a major, with the intention of going into a particular career field, read these chapters. They can help you figure out if there's actually a future in your chosen field. The last thing you want is to invest a lot of time and money in getting a particular degree only to find when you're done that there aren't many jobs available in the field you prepared for or that advancement in that field is slow or frozen.

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): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

- * 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 other occasional tests, counseling, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, the doors to the Education Center are open on Mondays, as well.

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) 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.

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.

Microsoft Software Home Use Program

If you're on the Coast Guard's payroll (i.e., not a contractor), you're eligible to participate in Microsoft's Software Assurance Home Use Program. The program enables you to get a licensed copy of most Microsoft® Office desktop PC applications to install and use on your home computer. You're also eligible for discounts on other Microsoft software via the Employee Purchase Program.

For more information, go to <https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/my poc/?uri=wcm%3a5b18ff004d89b9a6ae7fbe259abd3cf4>.

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 Center 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.