

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #393

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## ESO on TAD, Education Center Closed

I'll be on TAD from **Wednesday, 12 September through Friday, 14 September**. As a result, there will be no testing on those days and the Education Center will be closed. Keep this in mind if you want to take a test or submit a TA request. I'll have intermittent access to e-mail while I'm gone, but won't be able deal with TA requests.

## Question of the Week – Can I use scholarships and grants with TA?

**Q:** I've got a scholarship to attend college. Can I use tuition assistance along with the scholarship?

**A:** The short answer is, “Yes, but . . .”. Tuition assistance (TA) can be used with any other form of financial aid except GI Bill funding to pay for courses. (More on the TA-GI Bill relationship below.) Normally, TA pays up to \$250 per semester-credit or up to \$166.67 per quarter-credit, up to a maximum of \$4,500 per fiscal year. If you're receiving other funding for your education, you apply that funding to the amount you owe before applying TA to it.

For example, let's say you've got a \$1,000 scholarship that can be used to pay for tuition and fees. You're planning to take 12 credits and your school charges \$225/credit, for a total tuition of \$2,700. You'd first apply your scholarship to the total amount owed, which would leave a balance of \$1,700. To figure out the amount TA would pay, divide \$1,700 by 12 credits; TA would pay \$141.67/credit.

This is actually good news since it stretches your TA dollars farther, allowing you to take more courses in a fiscal year than would be the case if it were paying \$225/credit.

With respect to the GI Bill-TA relationship, we're talking about the MGIB-AD and MGIB-SR. You can use both TA and one of these GI Bill programs at the same time, but you can't use them TA and a GI Bill benefit for the same courses. That is, you can't receive GI Bill payments for courses TA paid for. The government will only pay for one course one time.

When it comes to the new GI Bill, using it with TA for the same course would be nonsensical – the school would be paid twice for one course since both pay the school directly – and it's not allowed.

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](mailto: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: ***Occupational Certification Programs*** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cert.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, ***a while*** and ***awhile***. (These definitions are taken from "20 Pairs of One-Word and Two-Word Forms" by Mark Nichol (<http://www.dailystyletips.com/20-pairs-of-one-word-and-two-word-forms/>) and corroborate with *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

"The noun phrase 'a while' and the adverb *awhile* are virtually interchangeable in a sentence, though you should precede the two-word form with the word *for*: 'I think I'll sit here for a while' and 'I think I'll sit here awhile' mean the same thing."

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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## "G.I. Jobs" & "Military Times Edge" Magazines

The current issues of the magazines "G.I. Jobs" and "Military Times Edge" are available in the Education Center whenever you're in the neighborhood and want to pick up a copy. Or you can use the on-line versions:

<http://www.gijobs.com/digimagsignup/index.html> and <http://www.militarytimesedge.com/>.

Both have very good and timely information these and many other topics:

- personal finances,

- the transition from a military to a civilian career,
- finding and applying for civilian jobs,
- how military personnel have landed on their feet in new civilian careers,
- career fields,
- applying for federal government jobs,
- entrepreneurship,
- higher education,
- how to get hired,
- how to stay competitive after getting a civilian job.

## Choosing a College

After just moving to a new duty station, most of us need to find a new dentist or, perhaps, a plumber, electrician, or general contractor. Word-of-mouth is often the best way to find someone who'll do the job well and for a reasonable price. But finding restaurants that suit your tastes, word-of-mouth only goes so far. My idea of good Mexican food may not match yours; we all have different tastes. The same is true for college. Your shipmate may rave about her experience with a particular college, but you may have a different experience. Your different experiences could depend on your respective majors or specific courses you're taking. Don't generalize from her specific experience.

The bottom line is: when shipmates recommend a specific college, do your own research before filling out that college's admission application. There are over 2,100 4-year for-profit and not-for-profit colleges and universities in the United States. If you're interested in 2-year schools, there are more than 1,700. Of these, the majority now have distance-learning or distance-education programs in hundreds of majors. There may be a number of schools that you'll be happy with. Don't just follow someone else's path. The very least you should do is compare a few schools. At <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf> you'll find a worksheet that will make keeping track of what you find on each a bit easier.

To see a diagram that walks you through the steps you should take before making your final decision as to which school is for you, check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ChoosingMajor&School.pdf>.

## New OS Tests

The latest version of the OS2 and OS1 end-of-course tests (now called Rating Advancement Tests or RATs) are here. While taking these tests, you will have access to references listed in Part V of the current OS Rating Proficiency Qualifications (RPQs). Your ESO will provide access to these references via a CD when you take your test.

While preparing for the RAT, you can find the references on-line at the following sites. (Note that some of the references are For Official Use Only (FOUO) and need to be appropriately safeguarded.)

- <https://cgportal.uscg.mil/delivery/Satellite/CG612/USCGDIRECTIVES>
- <https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>
- [https://collab.uscg.mil/lotus/myquickr/operations-specialist-rkm-e4-e7/welcome/lut/p/c5/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3hDC19DY0NfE0MLQw8zA08PFyc\\_r2BnDzMnl6B8pFm8AQ7gZEBA5d-IKEbTgXBJvrhIAfhNsLLFCKPzwH45B0N9P088nNT9QtylyqDPXUdATLKF1Y!/dl3/d3/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9n](https://collab.uscg.mil/lotus/myquickr/operations-specialist-rkm-e4-e7/welcome/lut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3hDC19DY0NfE0MLQw8zA08PFyc_r2BnDzMnl6B8pFm8AQ7gZEBA5d-IKEbTgXBJvrhIAfhNsLLFCKPzwH45B0N9P088nNT9QtylyqDPXUdATLKF1Y!/dl3/d3/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9n)

Be aware that the OS RPQs were updated during August 2012; please make sure you **download the most current version** from the CGPortal (<https://elearning.uscg.mil>). You can find complete information on the current OS servicewide exam eligibility requirements in ALCOAST 046/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST046-12.pdf>).

## New Aviation Rate Tests

The latest version of the AET2, AET1, AMT2, AMT1, AST2, and AST1 end-of-course tests (now called Rating Advancement Tests or RATs) are here. While taking these tests, you will have access to references listed in Appendix (A) of the current Rating Proficiency Qualifications (RPQs). Your ESO will provide access to these references via a CD when you take your test.

To take the applicable RAT, your ESO has to verify that you're eligible. Bear in mind that having your RPQs signed off isn't all you need to do to be eligible to take the RAT. Your CO or designated RPQ Reviewer must also have filled out and signed the statement in the REMARKS section of the "Record of Completion" that says you're eligible to take the Rating Advancement Test (RAT).

You can download the most current RPQs from the CGPortal (<https://elearning.uscg.mil>). And you can find complete information on the current servicewide exam eligibility requirements for all aviation ratings in ALCOAST 262/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST262-12.pdf>).

## Big Changes in Officer Application Process

Largely thanks to the initiative of LT Ashly Thomas at CGRC, the process of applying for OCS and other officer programs has recently become a great deal less painful. Most significantly, for Coast Guard enlisted personnel, the amount of paperwork an applicant must complete and include in her application has been cut by almost 75%. New check-off sheets have been created reflecting the paperwork reduction and the number of different check-off sheets has been reduced from six to two: one for applicants that are currently in the Coast Guard, and one that is for civilians or members of another service.

All applicants are also now to contact their nearest recruiting office as early as possible in the process to ensure they are screened for eligibility. Working with recruiters early on will also ensure applicants receive guidance and mentorship throughout the application process.

Finally, the CGRC web site (<http://www.gocoastguard.com>) has been revised to reflect these changes and updated with the most current application deadlines, forms, etc.

## 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 regular Coast Guard members to earn apprenticeship certification in any of 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 a credential (certification or license) in dozens of different occupational fields (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/cert.asp>) through a large number of nationally-recognized certification organizations. Here's a small sampling of the fields in which you can get certified:

- automotive service
- dental assistant
- contract management
- medical technologist
- personal trainer
- human resources specialist
- computer networking professional
- project management
- facilities management.

And if you're eligible for GI Bill benefits, you can likely get reimbursed up to \$2,000 for the cost of each certification or licensing exam in addition to getting your training paid for or reimbursed (depending on which GI Bill program you're using).

### PA Program: Not Just for HSs

If you're good at math and especially science, and are interested in the medical field, consider applying for the Coast Guard's Physician Assistant program. There are more prerequisites than just these, of course, but many people think you have to be an HS to apply for the program. That's not the case. You can be **enlisted in any Coast Guard rating (E-4 through E-7) or be an officer (ENS or LTJG)**.

If you're accepted into the program, you'll receive a bachelor of science degree at the end of Phase I (64 weeks) and a master of science degree at the end of Phase II (60 weeks). After completing your degrees, you'll be certified as a Physician Assistant and (if you're enlisted) attend a 5-week direct commissioning program at the Coast Guard Academy.

For all the details, check out ALCOAST 086/12 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST086-12.pdf>).

### 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](http://www.frederick.edu/courses_and_programs/degree_emergency_management.aspx).

### TECEP Tests Now Only \$99/Test

Not many people know that in addition to CLEP tests, they can earn college credit via DSSTs (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>), Excelsior College Exams (ECEs, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/ece.asp>), and TECEP tests

(<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/tecep.asp>). TECEPs – from the popular distance-learning school, Thomas Edison State College – used to cost \$80/credit. But they're now only \$99/test which is reimbursable through CGMA Supplemental Education Grants and (for enlisted personnel) Coast Guard Foundation grants (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp>).

## Coast Guard Foundation Grants

You may be unaware that the Coast Guard Foundation offers four different education grants to personnel serving on active duty (both regulars and Reservists).

- The Coast Guard Foundation Education Grant reimburses eligible enlisted personnel up to \$500 per calendar year (CY).
- The Van der Putten Education Grant reimburses eligible enlisted personnel up to \$250 per CY as a supplement for those who have received the maximum under the Foundation Education Grant.
- The Marine Science Education Grant reimburses eligible MSTs up to \$500 per CY.
- The University of Oregon Bookstore Education Grant reimburses up to \$500 per CY to enlisted personnel and officer applicants who have served in a designated Southwest Asia combat zone for 30 consecutive days or 60 non-consecutive days during the CY.

Note that these amounts are maximums and that there are no guarantees that you will receive a grant just because you applied for one. Although the Coast Guard Institute accepts applications for these grants year 'round, be aware that when you apply the pot of money from which these grants are awarded may be empty. Remember that funding for these grants comes from individuals (civilian and military) who contribute money when they can.

You may submit a grant request up to one year after you incur an eligible expense. All applications will be held for a year (in the order in which they were received) **OR** until a grant has been awarded, whichever occurs first. After that, your application will be shredded.

Even if it's been less than a year since the expense was incurred, you may **not** resubmit a grant request for amounts not reimbursed during the previous calendar year.

**EXAMPLE:** You submitted a request for a \$1,100 grant on 10 March 2012 and receive \$500 from the Foundation grant and \$250 from the Vander Putten grant in October 2012. You can't then submit an application for the 2013 funding cycle for the \$350 worth of items not reimbursed in 2012.

For more information (including a link to the current application form), go to  
[http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active\\_duty/pay\\_for\\_college/foundation\\_grants/feg\\_vpeg.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active_duty/pay_for_college/foundation_grants/feg_vpeg.asp).

## Are You Preparing for an ASVAB or Other Math Test?

TraCen Cape May has acquired the DVD course, "The Secrets of Mental Math" to help you prepare to re-take the AR or MK parts of the ASVAB or to learn short-cuts that will help you in college courses or in everyday life. The course includes 12 half-hour lectures. Here's a bit about it the course.

"One key to improving and expanding your math potential lies in the powerful ability to perform mental math calculations. Solving basic math problems in your head is a gateway to success in understanding and mastering higher mathematical fields such as algebra, statistics, and calculus. It's a skill that offers other lifelong benefits, including

- giving you a competitive edge in school or at work;
- keeping your mind active and sharp at any age;
- improving your performance on standardized tests; and
- learning to solve problems by using a variety of methods.

"Mental mathematics also is valuable when you're shopping for groceries or figuring out how much to tip at a restaurant. Believe it or not, learning how to do mental math can be fun. "The Secrets of Mental Math" is Professor Arthur T. Benjamin's exciting 12-lecture course which guides you through all the essential skills, tips, and tricks for improving and enhancing your ability to solve a range of mathematical problems right in your head."

Read more on this course at [http://www.thegreatcourses.com/tgc/courses/course\\_detail.aspx?cid=1406](http://www.thegreatcourses.com/tgc/courses/course_detail.aspx?cid=1406). If you decide it's up your alley, individuals and groups are welcome to use it in the Education Center.

### Online Academic Skills Course

Another resource to use both for tests like the AFCT/ASVAB and for college courses is Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC). To quote its web site, it's "designed for individuals who want to build a solid academic foundation by improving their math and verbal skills in order to score well on exams, advance their education, and excel in their careers. . . . OASC is available for free 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the web to service members (regular and Reserve), civilian employees, and their families."

The course (at <http://www.nlnetsolutions.com/dantes>) includes

- a pre-test (to gauge your strengths and weaknesses)
- a Customized Learning Path™ (a personalized set of lessons based on your pre-test results)
- lessons which include interactive activities, flash cards, quizzes, and practice tests,
- a post-test (to evaluate your progress).

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/oasc-faq.pdf>.

### Finding Cheap Textbooks

If you're taking college courses and are wondering where to find textbooks you don't have to sell your car to pay for, don't assume you'll find the best prices at Amazon or Barnes & Noble. You can find more than two dozen web sites at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/books.asp> most of which allow you to compare prices from other sites.

### New Fiscal Year & Tuition Assistance

If you're using or thinking of using TA, keep in mind that you can't currently apply for TA for any courses starting on or after 01 October 2012. The Coast Guard Institute can't obligate funds until Congress has signed a check to us for TA funding, via an appropriation bill.

If you've been hearing rumors that TA will be cut drastically or even eliminated in FY13, because of the country's fiscal problems, they're nothing more than rumors. Do **not** assume anything you hear about TA's future is true. No one – except, perhaps, a few flag officers – knows what shape TA will take in the coming FY. It *could* be that maximum amounts would be set lower than they are now (e.g., less than \$4,500 per FY and less than \$250/credit), whole classes of people *could* be prohibited from using TA (e.g., Reservists or civilians), the number of credits a person can use TA to pay for *could* be limited, or things *could* remain the same. We just don't know what TA will look like after 30 September.

If anyone says s/he knows what TA will be like in the coming months, do your part to control rumors and ask exactly where she got that information. If she starts out with "Well, I heard that . . .", tell her she's spreading unfounded rumors that do nothing but stir people up and to knock it off.

## Is Distance Learning 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 DANES 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.

## Scholarships

Below are descriptions of a number of scholarships open to military personnel, their dependents, or both. ***Be aware, however, that these are just a few of thousands of scholarships 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>.

### Alaska Sea Services Scholarship

(courtesy of Mr. Jose Velazquez)

If you're an Alaska resident, and are pursuing a college degree, you should apply for the Alaska Sea Services Scholarship. Even though the application deadline is 01 March 2013, don't procrastinate. For complete information, go to [http://www.netc.navy.mil/\\_documents/NewsReleases/pr\\_13512.pdf](http://www.netc.navy.mil/_documents/NewsReleases/pr_13512.pdf).

### Chief Warrant Officers and Warrant Officers Association

(courtesy of CWO4 Dianne Trawick)

Check out the Art and Eleanor Colona Scholarship (<http://www.cwoauscg.org/cwoa-forms/Colona-Scholarship-Application-and-Instructions.pdf>) for enlisted personnel and CWOA members' dependents (the deadline is 01 June), and the Chief Warrant Officer John A. Keller Scholarship ([http://www.cwoauscg.org/cwoa-forms/Keller\\_Scholarship\\_Application\\_2012.pdf](http://www.cwoauscg.org/cwoa-forms/Keller_Scholarship_Application_2012.pdf)) for members of the CWOA and their dependents (deadline 01 March).

### **Council of College and Military Educators**

(courtesy of MSTCS Lumpkin at Sector Delaware Bay, from military.com)

"Each year the Council of College and Military Educators offers fifteen \$1000 scholarships for Servicemembers, Military Spouses, and Veterans who are working towards the completion of higher education degrees. The 2013-14 CCME Scholarship Applications must be submitted online at <http://ccmeonline.org/scholarship>. This year's online application will be available July 16 must be completed by the October 1, 2012 scholarship application deadline. Read the Military Advantage Blog (<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2012/07/scholarship-update-ccme-2013/>) for more details."

### **Waldorf College**

(courtesy of Mr. Marc Fagenbaum, full-time ESO at Base Miami)

To recognize the sacrifices made by the family members of military servicemembers and public safety personnel (firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs & dispatchers) Waldorf College in Iowa will award eight scholarships for on-line students and two for residential students in 2012 through the Hero Behind the Hero Scholarship Program.

Two scholarships (one for the military spouse or dependent and one for the firefighters/law enforcement officer spouse or dependent) will be presented on the award dates listed. Applicants not selected may continue to apply for a maximum of five scholarship award dates.

#### ***Scholarship Application Periods***

01 AUG 2012 – 30 SEP 2012  
01 OCT 2012 – 30 NOV 2012

#### ***Scholarship Award Dates***

October 2012 (on-line)  
December 2012 (on-line)

Go to <http://www.waldorf.edu/Online/Tuition--Financing/Scholarships/Hero-Behind-the-Hero> for more information and a link to an on-line application. Or you can e-mail [hero@waldorf.edu](mailto:hero@waldorf.edu) or call 877-267-2157.

### **No More Paper & Pencil CLEP Tests**

DANTES Test Control Officers (TCOs, who are ESOs with authorization from DANTES) can no longer administer CLEP tests locally. At the moment, you'll have to find a national test center ([http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch\\_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp)) at which to take it. Because the closest test site to TraCen Cape May for computer-based tests is Rowan University (in Glassboro, NJ – about an hour and a half's drive), I'm working to find alternatives for Coast Guard personnel in southern New Jersey. It's unlikely my efforts will bear fruit before the end of the year, however.

For the time being, Prometric (another testing company) will continue to offer DSSTs in a paper format. Check out the offerings (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>) and see if some of them might fit into your degree plan.

### **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.

### **TraCen Cape May Testing Schedule**

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

Mondays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Tuesdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Thursdays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs; college tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

Fridays (0745): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs

College placement, AFCT, and all other tests will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis.

If you call and I don't answer the phone, I'm usually administering a test (and, because of the noise, 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](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

### **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. 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.