

TraCen Cape May Education Update #231

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Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
BM1 Richard Adams	TraCen (Seamanship)	DWINTO
DC2 Daniel George	TraCen (Seamanship)	E-PME-6
ETC Daryl Davis	ESD Cape May	E-PME-8*
HS2 Sarah Reid	TraCen (Clinic)	HS1*
HS2 Scott Fabian	TraCen (Clinic)	HS1
YN2 Tammy Walch	TraCen (Recruit PersRU)	E-PME-6
YN2 Roel Garcia	TraCen (Recruit Training)	YN1
GMC Derek Osborn	TraCen (Armory)	E-PME-8
BM2 Jamie Martin	TraCen (Seamanship)	DWINTO

* 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.

CGMA Supplemental Education Grant Increase

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) has graciously decided to increase the annual amount eligible Coast Guard personnel can receive to help offset the cost of education expenses not covered by tuition assistance (TA). Starting 01 January 2009, the maximum annual reimbursement will be \$250.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/grants.asp#seg>.

Fred's Place & Similar Web Sites

(paraphrased from an item written by Sector St. Petersburg ESO, Monty Mathis)

We've all heard the aphorism about everyone having an opinion about pretty much every subject. This is true about the new GI Bill ("Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008") and your shipmates and others are having a field day speculating about what is and isn't allowed under the new GI Bill.

As many of you already know, Fred's Place is a web site that offers a variety of useful information to all Guardians: regulars, Reservists, retirees, and civilian employees. When visiting Fred's Place please keep in mind the following:

1. Fred's Place, Military.com, and other web sites and blogs are NOT official Coast Guard policy outlets. Any information regarding education, pay, tuition assistance, advancement, the GI Bills, or any other policy should be verified through official Coast Guard sources.
2. Fred's Place is part of Military Advantage Incorporated which is part of the Monster.com Company. It, like most other web sites aimed at military audiences are for-profit companies which makes their money through advertising, subscriptions, and sales. By supplying your personal information to these and partner web sites you agree to their terms of service and subject yourself to more SPAM and possibly unwelcome e-mail.
3. Be wary of information passed along on message boards and blogs, especially with regard to your rate and servicewide exams. These boards and blogs can supply useful information, but don't assume it's current or even accurate. Also be aware that rumors run rampant on these boards as easily as they do on board ship.

Fred's Place and other web sites can be a useful for maintaining contact with your shipmates and can provide good information; just be careful and verify any information before acting on it.

In the Latest Issue of Decision Times...

A new issue of Decision Times (a supplement to the Navy Times) just arrived and is available in the Education & Career Development Center. Here's a list of some of the articles:

- Law enforcement in the 21st century
- Engineers in demand in tough economy
- Designer vs. developer – which web job is right for you
- Online job boards target retirees
- Join the FBI's tactical elite
- Fur-friendly franchises – vets cash in on pet care boom
- Low costs draw more students to public colleges
- Unemployment projected to reach 7 percent in 2009
- December career fairs

Copies of this issue, and many previous issues, are available for the taking. Stop by the Education & Career Development Center to pick up a copy. When you're done with it, please pass it along to someone else who might find it useful.

ACT Testing

On Thursday, 15 January I'll be administering the ACT at TraCen Cape May. ***If you need to take the ACT to apply for a Coast Guard program, please let me know ASAP and you can take it on 15 January.***

Unfortunately, ESOs may only administer the ACT for uniformed personnel (regular and Reserve). The first time you take it it's free; all subsequent times you take it on-base you have to pay a fee. Currently, the fee is \$31.

For more information on the ACT (and how it compares with the SAT), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>.

Age Criteria for Officer Programs Standardized

If you've ever applied for an officer program, you may have had a hard time figuring out if you were too old. The use of a concept called "constructive age" made it difficult for most mortals to calculate the maximum age at which you could apply for these programs.

ALCOAST 485/08 (published on 01 October) did away with the concept of "constructive age" and standardized all age ranges for the various officer programs. The table below

CATEGORY	MINIMUM AGE	MAXIMUM AGE*
OCS (temporary commission)	21	34
OCS (reserve commission)	21	30
Direct Commission Officer (except aviation and SRDC)	21	40
SRDC	22	35
Flight (where applicant is already commissioned or in OCS)	21	30
Direct Commission Aviator	21	33
Blue 21	21	30
AVCAD	21	30
CSPI	19	27
PPEP	21	32

* As of 30 September of the FY in which the selection board meets

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_____).

Tuition Assistance Applications Go On-Line!!

If you're planning to submit a TA application to me you must now use the "Sailor Tuition Assistance Application", referred

to as eTA. With eTA you can submit a TA request from any computer that has an Internet connection. This will decrease the time it takes for you to receive a TA authorization.

TraCen Cape May is one of seven sites throughout the Coast Guard which is now using the new application as a beta test for the whole Coast Guard. By next spring, the Coast Guard Institute expects most TA users will be receiving their authorizations in a matter of days rather than weeks. This is because by then ESOs will have authority to approve applications and generate authorizations locally.

To learn how to use the new system, go to my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/eta.asp#training>) where you'll find two tutorials. The first will walk you through the steps necessary to create an account on N@vy Knowledge Online, which you have to do before you can use eTA.

- All PHS personnel should click on "Register as a new guest user" and enter joseph.harvey.2 (all lower case) as the user ID.
- All Coast Guard personnel (military or civilian) should click on "Register as a new user" and follow the steps after that.

Use of eTA will become mandatory for most TA customers next Monday, 05 January 2009. Those without reliable Internet connectivity may continue to submit TA applications to their full-time ESOs by any means available. (The Institute is examining ways other than the CG-4147 form, including Coast Guard message and plain-text e-mail.)

CG Exchange System Dependent Scholarship

ALCOAST 489/08 announced the 2008 Coast Guard Exchange System Scholarship program for high-school-age dependents of all members of Team Coast Guard. Three scholarships will be awarded: \$1,500, \$750, and \$500.

In addition to the application form, applicants must also submit:

- a high school transcript or, for home schoolers, standardized test results
- SAT or ACT scores
- a short (1-page) essay
- two letters of recommendation

Applications and details are available by selecting "Scholarship Opportunities" at www.uscg.mil/mwr or by sending a pre-addressed and stamped business size (#10) envelope to CGES Scholarship Committee (ATTN: Jana Sias), Coast Guard Exchange System Headquarters, 870 Greenbriar Cir., Suite 502, Chesapeake, VA 23320-2681.

The deadline for submissions is 27 February 2009.

CG Foundation & Vander Putten Grants

All money donated by the Coast Guard Foundation and Mr. Roy Vander Putten has been exhausted. Pending applications for these grants may still be approved, since both the Foundation and Mr. Vander Putten are graciously considering contributing more funds before the end of this calendar year. (In the past, gift amounts have been in the neighborhood of \$40,000 from the Foundation and \$20,000 from Mr. Vander Putten.)

But don't apply for a grant assuming money is there or will be there. Even if the Foundation or Mr. Vander Putten decide to make further contributions, however, it can take as much as two months from the time the Institute knows funds are going to be made available to the time it has them to disburse them.

As the Coast Guard Institute's CO noted in a recent e-mail to ESOs, we need to keep in mind that because the Foundation's and Mr. Vander Putten's generosity has been so consistent in the past, it's easy to forget these grants are gifts to Coast Guard personnel – not entitlements. Please remember this and send a thank-you note to the Foundation if you receive a grant (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/cfa/fg_feedback.asp).

The Coast Guard Institute (which administers both of these grants) will publish more information as it's available.

Credit-by-Exam Study Materials

As of 01 January 2009, materials used to study for CLEP tests, DSST, and (to a lesser extent) ECEs previously available on loan from the DoD (via the Coast Guard Institute) will no longer be available. Because these materials can take a month to reach you, please don't submit any more requests for them.

Study materials relevant to most of the tests you can take for college credit are now available free through various sources via the Internet. Some of these are:

- Annenberg Media (<http://www.learner.org/>)
- the U.S. Department of Education (<http://www.free.ed.gov/>)
- the Public Broadcasting System (<http://www.pbs.org/>)
- the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/>)
- the History Channel (<http://www.history.com/>)
- MSN Encarta (<http://encarta.msn.com/>)
- Navy Knowledge Online (<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>)

In the future, a comprehensive DANTES exam study guide will be located on the Coast Guard Learning Portal (<https://learning.uscg.mil/>). It will include the SOC code for each exam, ACE credit recommendation, a practice exam, and links to on-line study aids.

Practice CLEP Tests

If you're planning to take one of the five general CLEP tests (English Composition, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences & History, Humanities, or College Math) and really want to make sure you pass the first time, consider taking the two practice tests available for each subject.

These practice tests are from Peterson's *CLEP Success* – a one-volume reference work which contains a subject-matter review and two practice tests for each of the five topics. You can find *CLEP Success* under the "Learning" tab at N@vy Knowledge Online (<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>).

Or, if you really want to do it right, ask your ESO to administer the practice tests as if they were the real thing, using the actual CLEP test answer sheet in the same environment as that in which you'll be taking the real thing.

To CLEP or Not to CLEP ...

Most Guardians have heard the acronym CLEP before. But surprisingly few really understand what it means, as demonstrated by people asking me to take a CLEP Humanities *course*. CLEP (College Level Examination Program) – one of a number of examination programs that allows you to take one test and, if you pass, earn 3 to 12 college credits. The other programs are DSST (DANTES Subject Standardized Tests) and ECE (Excelsior College Exams).

For people who are good at studying on their own, with no supervision, deadlines, homework, quizzes, etc. these programs are a truly great way by which to earn college credit. But as good as these programs are I have a few cautions.

First, *they're not for everyone*. If you don't have the time, energy, or diligence to devote to studying for them you probably won't do very well. These tests are the equivalent of a college final exam – some of them cover two semesters worth of information. They are NOT easy.

Second, *you won't necessarily be able to use the credits earned through these tests for your college degree*. Most people who take these tests eventually want to get a college degree. If you're in that category, before you decide to take one of these tests you should check to see if the college you plan to get your degree from accepts credit earned from these

exams. For schools which accept CLEP test scores, go to http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPColleges.jsp. For schools which accept DSST scores, go to http://www.getcollegecredit.com/04learners_c.html. For schools accepting ECE scores, go to https://www.excelsior.edu/portal/page?_pageid=57,83221&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

Third, *not all schools that accept credit earned through these programs accept scores at full value*. Your ESO has resources listing many schools and how much credit each gives for each type of test. But it's probably best to ask your counselor at the school of your choice about specific tests you have in mind.

With these cautions in mind, you can better make the choice whether to take a CLEP test, DSST, or ECE.

Uniformed personnel and their spouses, and Coast Guard civilian employees may take CLEP tests and DSSTs for free on base. ECEs are available free only to uniformed personnel. Coast Guard civilians, spouses and dependent children of uniformed personnel, retired uniformed personnel, CGES employees, and Auxiliaries may also take ECEs on base, but they have to pay for them. (See <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/edbenefits.pdf>.)

Activate Your GI Bill ASAP

If you're in the regular Coast Guard, didn't turn down the GI Bill during boot camp, and have served for two or more years on active duty you should activate your GI Bill education benefit. The same is true if you're a Reservist and have completed your IADT.

Why? Let me give you an analogy. Do you apply for a new credit card today and expect to have it to use tomorrow? The same is true for using your GI Bill education benefit. The VA can take three or four months to process your activation request and during that time, you can't use your benefit. (Activating your benefit does not start the clock running on your 10- or 14-year expiration period.)

And now, you can complete your activation request completely on-line using the VA's VONAPP web site (<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>). Mr. Waymon Bryant, full-time ESO at ISC New Orleans, provided the following step-by-step directions on how to fill out the activation request.

- Click on "Start VONAPP"
- Click "continue", located at the bottom right of the web page, until you reach the login and Pass screen
- Click on "Sign up now" and create a user name/ Password (with hint)
- Select "Form 22-1990" from the drop down menu located at the top and click continue
- You will be asked a series of questions to create your electronic submission.

Activate your GI Bill education benefits today, even if you don't plan to use them, so you'll be able to when you do want to use them.

Professional Development Courses from DoD Services

Many Guardians are unaware that they can take courses from the other services for professional development purposes. And, like Coast Guard courses, you can earn college credit by passing many of them. The firehouse personnel, for example, take a number of Air Force courses (and the corresponding end-of-course tests).

For many of you, this is a great way to get a slightly different perspective on the tasks you perform in your rating and add to your knowledge base. Doing this shows initiative, dedication to your rating, and can look good on your marks. There are also many courses unrelated to your specific jobs in the Coast Guard, but which give you a broader perspective. For example, the Marine Corps has a Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/caocl/>), to help its personnel deploying to Iraq better understand the culture and, from that, to have more productive interactions with the Iraqi people.

For more info on what's available from the various services, here are their web site:

Army: Army Correspondence Course Program (<http://www.atsc.army.mil/accp/aipdnew.asp>)

Navy: Navy Advancement Center (<https://www.courses.cnet.navy.mil/>) and the Naval War College's College of Distance Education (<http://www.nwc.navy.mil/academics/colleges/cde/overview.aspx>)

Marine Corps: Marine Corps Institute (<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/>)

Air Force: Air University (<http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/afiadl/main.htm>)

Education-related Brochures

Pick up one or more of the brochures listed below in the Education & Career Development Center.

- Is Distance Education Right for You?
- Choosing a Distance Learning College
- College Comparison Worksheet
- Why You Should I Get My Degree from a SOCCOAST School?
- Selecting the Right Degree and Major
- Coast Guard Tuition Assistance
- Using Your Chapter 30 GI Bill Education Benefit While on Active Duty
- Tuition Assistance Top-up Caution
- Coast Guard Foundation & Vander Putten Grants
- The Supervisor and the Performance Qualification Guide (PQG)
- Is a Business Degree for Me?
- I Don't Know What to Major In

Feel free also to pick up any the booklets *OCS Application Preparation Handbook* and *Supervisor's Guide to Preparing Officer Program Application Endorsements*.

Online Student Survival Guide

Western Governors University has a blog with all kinds of comments, tips, and general info about on-line courses. Check it out at <http://onlinestudentsurvival.com/>. NOTE: some of the items in this blog are thinly-veiled ads for Western Governors University, so take those with a grain of salt.

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. 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.

AFCT (ASVAB re-test) Preparation

If you really want to improve your ASVAB math or verbal scores, take a course through your local community college.

For example, Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) has review courses in math and English you can use tuition assistance to pay for. Rather than flounder around trying to study on your own, kill two birds with one stone: get a feel for what college courses are like and brush up on the subjects you need to improve to get to "A" school.

Another option is to use prep materials for the math and English parts of the GED. Much of what you'll be tested on in the AFCT (the in-service version of the ASVAB) is covered by the GED tests.

And you can find more resources (especially for math) linke to the TraCen Cape May web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/asvab.asp#preparing>.

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.