

TraCen Cape May Education Update #261

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Question of the Week

Q: I want to run my own charter boat when I get out of the Coast Guard, and need a 100-ton license to do that. Can I use my GI Bill to cover that?

A: The short answer is, "Yes!" In fact, you can take both the 100-ton licensing exam preparation course and the exam itself using GI Bill funding.

You can use the Montgomery GI Bill to pay for many (if not most) OUPV (operator of uninspected passenger vessel) courses (<http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/training/oupv.pdf> and http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/search_programs.htm). And when it comes time to take the licensing exam, the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, and REAP will pay up to \$2,000 for each test you take – no matter how many times it takes you to pass. AND the money to pay for these exams isn't charged against your 36-month entitlement.

This is true for other licensing and certification programs, as well: the Montgomery GI Bill will pay for the course and as many certification/licensing exams as you need to take (up to \$2,000 per test): law school and the bar exam, an MBA degree and CPA license, cosmetology school and the licensing exam, culinary school and certification exams, etc.

If you've already given up one of the other GI Bills (MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP) to get benefits under the new GI Bill, I have bad news for you. The new GI Bill will pay up to \$2,000 for only one exam and won't pay for the prep course unless it's offered by an institution of higher learning. (An institution of higher learning is generally defined as an institution which awards degrees.)

Employment for Veterans & Soon-to-Be Veterans

On Thursday, 27 August, Stockton College will be hosting a free conference to help veterans and military personnel who are retiring or otherwise separating learn about new careers being created in southern New Jersey in health care, energy, green technologies, aviation, and hospitality.

Participants can get job search support including tips on resume writing, interviews, using job search engines and social networking sites. And you can also learn about educational opportunities in the region.

This conference is a cooperative effort among Atlantic Cape Community College, Atlantic County Institute of Technology, Cape May Technical High School, and Stockton College.

For more information and to register (by 25 August), go to <http://inraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=107&pageID=39> or call 609-652-4227.

01SEP Scholarship Deadline: Servicemembers & Their Spouses

Every year, the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) offers scholarships to United States service members and their spouses who are working towards the completion of higher education degrees. Each award is in the amount of \$500 and may be used for tuition, fees, books and other expenses encountered by the student pursuing educational goals. The application deadline is 01 September.

For more information, go to <http://www.ccmeonline.org/nashville10.aspx?session=scholarships>.

ME Rating Update

Information about the new Maritime Enforcement Specialist rating is available on the Coast Guard Portal (<https://cgportal.uscg.mil/lotus/myquickr/me/welcome>) including force notes, the billet map, and info on the process of lateraling from other rates.

The rating force master chief for the new rating is MECM Gordon Muise. He advises that you can find answers to the majority of your questions in ALCOASTs 409/09, 410/09, 411/09, and 445/09. Force Notes can be found on CG Portal (above).

If you'd like to obligate two years of service, Master Chief Muise advises, "We were told it could be done, but now we are hearing from the field unless someone is within the time window to extend or re-enlist they can't. Sorry for the confusion. I recommend at least fill out a Career Intentions Worksheet stating you wish to extend. Submit it to your command and have them note it on their endorsement."

He also advises that "If you speak a foreign language, I suggest you list under skills. Include your skill level."

The deadline for submitting your request to lateral is 02 October 2009 for enlistees and 09 September 2009 for warrant officers. Remember that your request must include a command endorsement. That being the case, make sure you submit your request early enough to your command to allow time for it to be properly reviewed and for an endorsement to be drafted.

Learning a Second Language for Coast Guard Duties

Practically everyone's seen an ad in a magazine or a commercial on TV for Rosetta Stone software for learning a foreign language. But don't go out and buy it just because everyone's talking about it. Before you log on to Rosetta Stone's web site to order the software, do some research.

- Check the price. There's no Coast Guard funding available to reimburse you for Rosetta Stone or any other language software you buy on your own.
- Ask around; see if you can find others who have used Rosetta Stone. Find out if it helped them learn what they need to know to talk about Coast Guard-related matters (e.g., law enforcement) in the target language. Unless you just want to learn another language for fun, if the software doesn't help you learn what you need to learn it's probably not worth buying.

If you really need to know a second language for work, the Coast Guard will probably pay for you to learn it. But a method other than software may be more effective. That is, if all you can do after months of using a computer program is make small talk, it's probably not worthwhile for Coast Guard purposes.

Check around to see if there are any intensive language training courses available in your area through a college/university, a commercial language school, or a government agency. For example, now that the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Protection agency work for the same cabinet secretary, you may find that you can get into a CBP language training program that either the Department or Coast Guard will pay for.

Tuition Assistance Processing Tips

As we approach the beginning of a new school year, the number of tuition assistance requests is likely to increase. Here are a few tips which will speed up processing time.

- (1) **Use eTA (rather than a PDF form) to submit your TA request.** When you use eTA, all the data you enter is automatically transferred to the computer program which generates TA authorizations. When you use a PDF form, Coast Guard Institute personnel have to type into the TA authorization program everything you have on your form. That's why the Institute often sends you your authorization a few minutes after your ESO submits an eTA request, and why it takes a few days to get your authorization if you use the PDF form. (For instructions on how to use eTA, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/ta.asp#applying>.)
- (2) **Get it right the first time.** Make sure EVERYthing on your TA request is accurate to avoid back-and-forth e-mails and, perhaps, you having to re-do the application or missing your school's payment deadline.
- (3) **Provide documentation without being asked.** Your ESO is required to verify that the per-credit tuition and fees you list on your application are correct. If you don't send this documentation, your ESO will have to ask you for it, which will slow down the process.
- (4) **NEVER contact the Institute directly about tuition assistance.** If you have a question about TA in general or your TA request in particular, ask your ESO. The more information requests the Institute has to handle, the slower it processes TA requests.
- (5) **Be patient.** Don't assume that you'll receive your TA authorization overnight or in a few hours just because you have in the past. The Institute's work flow varies. When application volume is low, turn-around is quick. But when volume is high (as at the beginning of a school year), turn-around time slows a bit. Because of this, the Institute's staff guarantees only that you'll have your authorization in less than two weeks.
- (6) **Plan ahead.** Submit your TA request as soon as you know which courses you'll be taking (course number and name) and their starting and ending dates. The Institute will accept TA applications up to three months before the course starting date. If you know your courses more than three months in advance, you can fill out the eTA application and save it, then submit it to your ESO three months before the starting date.

Be Prepared to Wait for New GI Bill Benefits

An 18 August article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* wants those who plan to use benefits from the new GI Bill for the academic term about to begin that payments could be delayed.

"As of Monday [17 August], the department had yet to process 211,251 educational-benefits claims, up from 191,388 last week, according to a workload chart posted on the department's Web site. Some colleges are already making arrangements to accommodate veterans who could be still waiting for their educational-benefits checks on the day tuition payments are due."

To read the complete article, go to http://chronicle.com/article/GI-Benefits-Checks-Could/48024/?sid=cc&utm_source=cc&utm_medium=en.

Five Tips to Earn Your Degree in the Military

(from military.com)

“According to most surveys, education is the number one reason given for joining the military. Then why do so many service members put off their education goals until they leave the military?”

“Many veterans find it more difficult to pursue their education when they get out of the military and end up missing out on their education benefits. The truth is it’s rare to find an employer that offers as much education support as the military and it is usually much harder to go to school part time as a civilian.”

Our optempo has never been higher, and that makes it hard to focus on pursuing your education goals. But the Coast Guard “is serious about helping you earn your degree” and your nearest full-time ESO can help you.

For the rest of article, go to <http://www.military.com/education/uop/five-tips-earn-degree-in-military.html?ESRC=coastguard.nl>.

MBA vs. MPA

Most people have heard of MBA (master of business administration) degrees, but few have heard of MPA (master of public administration) or MPP (master of public policy) degrees. The MPA and MPP are, essentially, the public (and not-for-profit) sector versions of the MBA.

The core courses in an MBA program are designed to introduce students to the various areas of private sector business such as accounting, marketing, human resources, operations management, economics, organizational behavior, marketing, finance, strategy, operations management, international business, information technology management, supply chain management, and project management..

The MPA and MPP prepare individuals to serve as managers in the executive arm of local, state/provincial, and federal/national government, and increasingly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the not-for-profit sector. Instruction includes the roles, development, and principles of public administration; public policy management and implementation; the relations between organizational management and legislators; the public and non-profit budget processes and financial management; administrative law; personnel management focusing on civil employees; professional ethics; and appropriate research methods.

10 Reasons to Get an MPA or MPP

1. So you can make a difference, change the world & help others by solving problems
2. Learn to better communicate and work in teams & groups
3. Understand the bigger picture (beyond just the bottom line) to get things done
4. Have a flexible degree that lets you transition seamlessly across sectors – public, private, and not-for-profit
5. Improve your professional knowledge, skills & abilities and thus open up new career opportunities
6. Meet passionate and committed individuals who share your interests
7. Prepare yourself for a rapidly changing economy and globalized world
8. Develop your decision-making, judgment & leadership skills
9. Have an impact on public policy on whatever level you’re working on
10. Because an MPA or MPP will help you succeed at items 1 through 9 more than a JD or MBA

If you like the missions, goals, and security of government service, consider the MPA or MPP (and related undergraduate degrees).

Transferring New GI Bill Benefits from Non-CAC Computers

CG-6 has provided a step-by-step process for shipboard personnel (using a shipboard workstation) to access the TEB site and complete the benefits transfer process.

Before you start the first step, however, you'll need two things: a Coast Guard workstation with common access card (CAC) reader installed and the 6- to 8-digit PIN you entered when you got your CAC.

Units are authorized to purchase CAC readers (for about \$8) and have them installed by their IT personnel. The CAC reader by itself will not let users log on using the CAC, however. As to your PIN, if you've forgotten it you'll need to get it re-set by a facility that issues CACs.

Once the CAC reader has been installed and you have your PIN, here's the process.

- Log onto your shipboard Coast Guard workstation as you normally do (i.e., with your user name and password, NOT using your CAC).
- Insert your CAC into the reader.
- Open Internet Explorer and go to the TEB web site.
- Enter your CAC PIN when asked.

Remember: logging onto the computer is a separate process from logging into the TEB web site. You may not use your CAC for the first process; you must use it for the second.

FY10 Tuition Assistance Requests

This year there will be no magic date for starting to submit FY10 TA applications. That is, as you figure out what course you want to take you can submit your application regardless of the course's starting date. HOWEVER, the Institute won't process requests until the beginning of September 2009.

What does this mean? It's pretty much the same as in previous years: you shouldn't expect to have a TA authorization in hand until after the new fiscal year begins. This isn't to say you *won't* have it, but you shouldn't be counting on it. That means you shouldn't register for courses expecting to have TA since you may or may not have it by your school's payment deadline.

Physician Assistant Program Prerequisites

To qualify for the Physician Assistant (PA) program, you must complete (among other things) an Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) course. HS3 Tara Buckley (at ISC San Pedro) found a distance learning course that meets Coast Guard requirements. It's offered by Mayville State University in North Dakota and you can find info about it at http://www.mayvillestate.edu/worldwide_learning/anatomy_physiology.cfm. (Before you scoff at the fact it's in North Dakota, consider that it was the then-frontier states of the mid-west which first offered distance learning courses in the 1880s.)

LCDR James Cannon, who manages the Physician Assistant Program, notes that he continues to receive applications from those who "try to use an introductory course with an A&P I in an attempt to meet the six semester hour (SH) requirement. The A&P should be the 6 SH series with a part I & II. The same logic applies to the chemistry course requirement."

New GI Bill Benefits Transfer Tip

(Courtesy of Rob McKee, full-time ESO at Sector San Juan)

When you're using the Transfer of Education Benefits web site (<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/TEB/consent?continueToUrl=%2FTEB%2F>) to transfer new GI Bill benefits to dependents, you may have a question as to what date to enter when asked for "End Date for Benefits".

If you're transferring the benefit to children, use their 26th birthdate; for your spouse, enter the date that's 15 years from your expected retirement or separation date.

Excellent Overview of New GI Bill

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has produced an 8-minute video that provides an excellent overview of the new GI Bill. You can find it on YouTube and at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/feature/amervet/video/amvet2009-7-1.asx>.

Some CG workstations may not yet have the most up-to-date software, which may make it impossible for you to view it on a CG computer. If that's the case and you want to see it, send the link to a non-CG e-mail address and you'll be able to view it on any non-CG computer you check your e-mail from.

NewGIBill.org

Trying to make the new GI Bill more understandable, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America has created a web site called NewGIBill.org (<http://www.newgibill.org/>). The site provides an overview of benefits and eligibility rules for the new GI Bill. But perhaps its best feature is a calculator (<http://www.newgibill.org/calculator>).

One tab helps you determine whether you're eligible and, if so, how many months of benefits you're entitled to. Another shows you the amount of financial aid you may receive under the new GI Bill, and a third shows you how many years you'll need to obligate to if you want to transfer your benefit to a dependent.

Service Obligation & Transferring New GI Bill Benefits

If you're now eligible for retirement or will be before 01 August 2013, check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp#obligation> for info on how many years (if any) you'll have to serve if you want to transfer your new GI Bill benefits to a dependent.

New GI Bill Benefits Transfer Procedures

As you know, servicemembers eligible for benefits under the new GI Bill may transfer them to a dependent after serving six years (in the case of a transfer to your spouse) or ten years (to transfer them to a child). This transfer may **only** be accomplished while you're still serving in the Coast Guard. Once you leave, by any means (discharge, retirement, medical retirement) you can no longer transfer your benefits.

For this reason, the DoD recommends that even if you have no plans to transfer benefits to your spouse or a child, you should transfer at least one month of your benefit to each eligible dependent before you leave the Coast Guard. You can modify or revoke your transfer decision at any time in the future, but only if you've made the transfer.

For more information on how to do this, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp#procedure>.

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.

More on Scholarships

Don't assume that because you've received the maximum from CGMA and CG Foundation grants or because you're not academically gifted or eligible for a scholarship aimed at military personnel that there are no other sources of funds for

you. Every year, thousands of organizations throughout the country provide money to students to put toward their college expenses.

Unfortunately, most Guardians seem to think they can't qualify for them because they're only for people with exceptionally high grades or exceptional talent in one field or another. This is not the case, in many, if not most, cases. A huge number of scholarships are what might be called trait scholarships: scholarships given to people who share a trait with the group that's awarding the scholarship

Some of these traits are ethnicity, race, membership in a particular organization, and religion, and many other things. It's almost not exaggerating to say that if your mother is Polish and your father Italian and you were born on a Tuesday in Minnesota you can probably find a couple of scholarships you qualify for.

There are books and web sites which catalog thousands of scholarships. And because there are so many scholarships available, and because finding those you qualify for is tedious, there is a lot of money (as in many millions of dollars) that goes begging for takers every year.

All it takes to become a recipient of scholarship money is patience and organization. My web site lists a few scholarships specifically aimed at you (or military personnel in general) and your dependents, as well as some randomly selected scholarships anyone can apply for (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/scholarships.htm>).

You can search for scholarships on-line (using any of the many scholarship search engines available) or you can use books. The Education Center has a number of books you can look in to find scholarships that you qualify for. But the best resource I've found (and which I highly recommend) is Ben Kaplan's *How to Go to College Almost for Free*. This book doesn't have lists of scholarships you might apply for. Rather, it provides a roadmap for conducting your scholarship search and application process. With it you may be able to do what the author himself did: obtain almost \$90,000 in scholarship money that could be used at any school for any purpose.

A word of caution: Keep in mind, while searching for scholarships, that there are con artists out there waiting to take advantage of your need for college financial aid. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has a web site devoted to [Scholarship Scams](#) that you should check out.

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 to the Institute via its TA tracking program. If you're unable to put your SSN on it (e.g., if you print it to a PDF file from your computer screen), provide it to your ESO.

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

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

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

Deploying?

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

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

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

Leaving the Coast Guard?

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

You should also request an education assessment from the Coast Guard Institute (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/collegefaq.asp>) to get a transcript of college credit you've acquired through your service in the Coast Guard. If you don't request an assessment before you leave active duty, you can't get one later. If you're not planning to go to school right away, you'll probably need to find work. Here are two excellent resources for finding a job – or even a second career. Also, Military.com has a very good series of web pages devoted to veterans (<http://www.military.com/Careers/Home/0,13373,,00.htm>).

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

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

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

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](http://military-education.military.com/2009/06/new-gi-bill-advice-get-it-in-writing.html) 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.

College Give-Aways

Periodically, the Education Center receives give-away items from colleges that are looking for your business. These include things like pens, mouse pads, notebooks, refrigerator magnets, sewing kits, and the like.

If you'd like to check out what's available and take any we have, please stop by the Education Center and look on the deck just inside the door to your right (under the light switch). You're welcome to anything there.