

TraCen Cape May Education Update #275

In this Update:

- Congratulations!!!
- TraCen ESO out of office
- Question of the week
- Frequently confused words
- TraCen Cape May testing calendar
- CG Institute eliminates degree planning
- Documents required for officer program interviews
- Skillsoft: free on-line courses, hundreds of subjects
- Continuing education courses
- Studying for CLEP Math/English test (or ASVAB)?
- New law standardizes in-state tuition rules
- New tuition assistance authorization procedure
- Language software reimbursement
- *Military Times* Edge
- New GI Bill update
- Vocational courses & financial aid
- CGMA grants
- Scholarships for military children
- CG spouse college grant
- CG Exchange System scholarships
- CG Foundation grants
- Free SAT & ACT prep software
- Officer program applicants, listen up!
- On-line test scheduling
- Career myths
- Thinking of teaching?
- Leaving the Coast Guard?
- Miscellaneous

Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
YNC Dallas Brannon	TraCen (recruit training)	E-PME-8*
MKC Glenn Lavalette	SFO Atlantic City	E-PME-8*

* First time taking test

Well done, Chiefs!!

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.

TraCen ESO Out of Office – Plan Ahead!!

The Education Center will be closed from Friday, 18 December through Monday, 28 December while I'm on leave. I won't have access to e-mail or voice-mail while I'm gone. If you have education-related questions, please check out my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/ESOmain.asp>). If you can't find what you're looking for there, e-mail me and I'll respond as soon as I can when I get back on Tuesday, 29 December.

Question of the Week

- Q:** Some people tell me I can transfer my new GI Bill benefits to my daughter until she's 26, some tell me it's 23. Which is it?
- A:** If you want dependents (your spouse or children) to be able to use your benefits under the new GI Bill, you **must** transfer all or part of your benefits to them before you leave the Coast Guard. Dependent children may use your new GI Bill benefits until they turn 26, but your benefit must have been transferred to them before their 23rd birthday (when they drop out of DEERS).

For these reasons, the DoD and Coast Guard recommend you transfer at least one month of your benefit to each of your dependent children ASAP no matter how young they are and to your spouse. That way, if you leave the Coast Guard unexpectedly (e.g., you're injured and retired with a disability) you won't have to remember to make that transfer before taking off your uniform for the last time.

Keep in mind that after the transfer has been approved by the Coast Guard, you or your spouse or your dependent child must then activate by completing and submitting an application to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). Since the DVA usually take between three and four **months** to process an application, you should submit the application at the earliest possible time. **There are zero adverse effects from getting your benefits activated.**

For more information on the process of transferring these benefits to a dependent, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp>.

Frequently-Confused Words

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

The word **adverse** is an adjective: "The ship was hindered by adverse winds" and "The defendant received an adverse verdict." Words derived from it include the nouns *adversary* and *adversity*.

The word **averse** is also an adjective, but has a totally different meaning: "She wasn't averse to the idea", meaning "She wasn't against the idea". Words derived from averse include *aversion* (e.g., "His psychiatrist believed strongly in aversion therapy") and *aversive*.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800*): EOCTs and AQEs

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

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

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

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays (and, since there's not a huge call for language testing, often Mondays) available for counseling, AFCT tests, and other face-to-face interactions with you. (Thursday afternoons I give a presentation to Reserve recruits on tuition assistance and the four GI Bill programs.)

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

CG Institute Eliminates Degree Planning

Degree planning, which has been a part of the Coast Guard Institute's repertoire of services, has been discontinued as of this week.

Assessments of Coast Guard service for college credit will still be performed and transcripts will still be provided.

Documents Required for Officer Program Interviews

If you're applying for an officer program (OCS, AVCAD, DCE, or PPEP) you know that you have to have an interview as part of the application process. And before the interview takes place, you have to provide the interview board members with a number of documents from your application – not your whole application folder.

Essentially, you provide the interview board members with everything the selection board members will see. And the selection board sees everything that bears on your suitability for a commission – not eligibility for a specific program. Regular and Reserve military personnel can find a revised list of the specific items you are to provide (taken from the application check-off sheets, one for each program) at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/interview.asp#info>.

SkillSoft: Free On-line Courses, Hundreds of Subjects

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

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

The courses fall into these general categories:

- Business skills & certifications
- Desktop applications
- IT professional curricula & certifications
- CG Unit Leadership Development Program
- Information systems technician
- Information systems management
- Legal compliance curricula
- Environmental, safety and health, and transportation curricula
- DHS training requirements

In addition, you can also Books 24x7, an on-line library of hundreds of books covering topics related to business, IT, office and personnel management, and office computer applications.

Continuing Education Courses

Cape May County Technical School District, at the Technical Center for Continuing Education (exit 11 on the Garden State Parkway), offers dozens of courses in topics as varied as:

- Ballroom dancing
- Computer applications
- Cooking/baking
- Languages
- Health and fitness
- Office, business, and careers

- Special training (e.g., defensive driving, digital photography, dog obedience, genealogy, financial education, etc.)
- NJ licensing (e.g., Black Seal, dental radiology, wastewater, cosmetology, etc.)
- General interest technical (e.g., auto repair, cabinetmaking, woodturning, etc.)
- Job/business technical (e.g., HVAC, art metal work, electrical house wiring, masonry, upholstery, welding, etc.)

These courses are all extremely reasonably priced, with classes generally meeting in the evenings.

In addition, the TCCE has on-going **free** GED preparation courses and testing, adult basic education courses, ESL courses, citizenship courses, and computer literacy courses running continuously throughout the year.

For more information, go to Cape May Tech's web site at <http://www.capemaytech.com/ContinuingEducation.htm>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Law Standardizes In-State Tuition Rules

Military personnel who have been on active duty for 30 or more days, along with their dependent spouses and children, became eligible on 01 July 2009 to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state where they reside or are permanently stationed. Those eligible will continue to pay the in-state tuition rate as long as they remain continuously enrolled at the institution even if the sponsoring servicemember is reassigned outside the state.

By enacting an amendment last year to the Higher Education Act, Congress standardized the patchwork state-by-state arrangement that had previously existed. Now all public higher education institutions which receive funding under the Act are required to charge eligible personnel in-state tuition.

New Tuition Assistance Authorization Procedure

The Navy has released a new version of the eTA online application system. Tuition assistance (TA) authorizations are no longer sent to you and your ESO via e-mail. Instead, you will receive an e-mail generated by eTA which will advise you your authorization is available, where to find it, and how to download it from eTA.

Your ESO will not receive either an e-mail or a copy of your authorization, and will not be able to obtain a copy of your authorization without requesting one from the Coast Guard Institute.

If you ever need another copy of an authorization, you can log into eTA and download it.

Note that the electronic signature on these new authorizations will look different from what you and your school are used to. Because of this, some schools may question the validity of the authorization. If this happens, assure your school personnel that the authorization is valid and still shows an authorization number the school needs to receive payment. Schools which want more than your assurances can call the Institute's TA Hotline at 800-954-1360 or, if absolutely necessary, CWO2 Joe Harvey at 405-954-7233.

Language Software Reimbursement

The Coast Guard Foundation Education Grant and the Coast Guard Vander Putten Grant programs will no longer approve reimbursement costs for foreign language courses that are free through Navy Knowledge Online. Language courses not offered through NKO will still be reimbursable through the Grants Program.

To see the courses offered through NKO, log on to <https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>, then click on the "LEARNING" tab and, after that, the section labeled "Click Here To Access Navy E-Learning Anytime Anywhere". A new window will open and under the "Content" menu on the left side click "Browse Categories", then select "Foreign Language & Culture" and "Sustainment and Enhancement Language Courses".

Anyone who purchased the Rosetta Stone foreign language course and has a receipt dated before 1 December 2009 may be eligible for reimbursement. The receipt must be less than one year old from date of application.

Military Times Edge

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

- Write Your Own Ticket: Army blogger-turned-civilian wordsmith
- Extra Credits: Finish college faster
- Military-friendly employers: what reservists should look for – and where to look
- Service with a side: 3 military moonlighters on how they do it
- Put social media to work: 3 tips for building a useful online network
- A fair wind: Logistics officer's career takes a powerful turn
- From command to corner office: how to find a senior-ranking job on the outside
- And more ...

New GI Bill Update

The Coast Guard has asked the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to clarify a number of issues related to the new GI Bill and has posted the questions and the DVA's responses on the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard's blog at <http://coastguardallhands.blogspot.com/2009/11/update-onprocessing-times-of-post-911.html>.

More information about using the new GI Bill is available in ALCOAST 684/09.

Vocational Courses & Financial Aid

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

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

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

CGMA Grants

The last day to receive a CGMA Supplemental Education Grant for 2009 is 30 December 2009. All checks cut after this date will be processed in January and will go towards your 2010 allowance.

Scholarships for Military Children

The Scholarships for Military Children program began accepting applications for 2010 scholarships on 01 November 2009 at www.militaryscholar.org. The group awarded 625 scholarships worth \$1,500 each to children of servicemembers this year, and over the past nine years has awarded more than \$7.3 million in scholarships.

"The applicants' grade-point averages are really high, so we also look at the number of school and community activities, extracurricular and volunteer activities, and part- or full-time work experience," said Bernard Coté, president of Scholarship Managers, which administers the program on behalf of the nonprofit Fisher House Foundation. "Of course, the applicants submit an essay that is a very important element as well."

Coast Guard Spouse College Grant

"Could you use up to \$6,000 in additional financial assistance to help pay for your advanced education? Through Columbia College's new Coast Guard Spouse Grant, you can receive a 50 percent tuition discount for online and on-campus courses." These grants can be used for on-campus and on-line courses, up to \$6,000 per spouse. Spouses must be degree-seeking and fully admitted to Columbia College.

For more information about these grants, as well as other financial aid for spouses, go to <http://www.ccis.edu/military/spouses.asp>.

CG Exchange System Scholarships

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

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

Coast Guard Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Institute has advised ESOs that all funds have been exhausted for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grants and Vander Putten Education Grants programs.

The Institute will continue to accept applications until 1 December 2009. If you have not received a check by 31 December 2009, you may resubmit a new application to cover unpaid expenses beginning 1 January 2010. Please remember that you must submit your grant request less than a year after the date on your receipt.

Free SAT & ACT Preparation Software

eKnowledge Corporation and the NFL have teamed up to provide free SAT and ACT preparation software to servicemembers and their families. If you received the software last year, you'll need to get a free upgrade. While the software is free (retail price \$200), you must pay \$13.84, which covers the cost of technical and customer support, registration, licensure, processing, handling, and worldwide shipping.

Parents of high school students applying for college next year should get this software early, so their children can begin preparing ASAP.

To order, go to www.eknowledge.com/nfl or call 951-256-4076. You will need to provide a "Sponsorship Code", which I'll be glad to send you if you send me a request by e-mail. Please don't share this code with anyone.

Officer Program Applicants, Listen Up!

When preparing your application for the Coast Guard's officer programs, keep in mind that the submission deadline has *ABSOLUTELY NO BEARING* on the date of your interview. The report prepared by the interview board can be used with applications for two years from the date it was signed.

Also be aware that the submission deadline you have to concern yourself with is the date by which applications have to be submitted to your local recruiting office by your ESO (see ALCGRECRUITING 10/09). Make sure you get your application to your ESO in time for him/her to get it to the recruiting office by the deadline listed in the message.

To figure out this date, talk with your ESO. Some ESOs may want your application a month ahead of the recruiting office deadline; others may only need a few days lead time.

On-line Test Scheduling

Training Center Cape May is trying out an Internet-based program for scheduling tests, officer program interviews, and pretty much anything the imagination can come up with.

So, if you'd like to schedule an EOCT or AQE, you can now go to the reservation web site (http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/TraCen_Cape_May/EOCTs).

Other ESOs who want to create a similar testing reservation system (it's free!) should contact me for information.

Career Myths

Excelsior College's alumni magazine often includes articles of use to military personnel about to enter or re-enter the civilian work force. The latest issue has an article entitled "Fact or Fiction: The Truth About Career Myths" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/careermyths.pdf>). You can also read "Skills Employers Seek" (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/skills.pdf>) and the Fall/Winter 2008 issue.

Check 'em out!

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.

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

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

Quick Reference Study Guides

The TraCen Education Center also has a binder full of SparkCharts Quick Reference Guides on almost 40 subjects. You're welcome to use these in the Education Center or make copies to take with you. You can check out the subjects available at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/books.asp#spark>.

Education Library

In addition to SparkCharts, the Education Center also has a library of books on leadership, management, Coast Guard history, and other topics. Also in the library are the latest Professional Qualification Guides (PQGs) for each rating.

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

Get It in Writing!

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

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