

TraCen Cape May Education Update #308

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Congratulations!!

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

Name	Work Site	Test
FN Justin Dickens	TraCen Firehouse	E-PME-4*
SN Krystal Mills	TraCen Recruit SPO	E-PME-4

* First attempt

Well done, both of you!!

And if you've just finished a degree program or have any other noteworthy academic achievement to brag about, please let me know so I can recognize you for it.

Question of the Week Update

Last week, I addressed the following question: "I'm eligible to retire on 01 December 2012 and want to transfer my GI Bill benefits to my dependents. Do I have to obligate additional service to do this?"

Since then, it's come to my attention that the information I provided to answer the question was not as clear as it could be. For what I hope is clearer information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33c.asp#obligation>.

Question of the Week

Q: I'm a Reservist and understand I can use my MGIB-SR benefits as long as I stay in the Reserve. Does that mean drilling and IRR?

A: No. You're only eligible to use your MGIB-SR benefits while you're in the Selected Reserve, not the IRR. That is, only as long as you're drilling.

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.

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 **Civilian Employees** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/civilians.asp>).

Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused words. This week, the issue is the confusion of the words **assistance** and **assistants** which sound alike, but have completely different meanings.

Assistance is a noun meaning the act of assisting or the help that's being supplied. "The Girl Scout gave her assistance to the blind man who was crossing the busy street".

Assistants is also a noun, but in this case it's the plural form of the word *assistant*, a person who assists another or an auxiliary device, substance, or person. "The magician picked an assistant from among the audience members" and "The tenured professor had many assistants in his lab".

The two words may be used together, as in "The doctors' assistants provided urgently-needed assistance."

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.

Service-wide Exams at TraCen Cape May

The October (Reserve) service-wide exams (SWEs) will be administered in the TraCen Cape May Education Center (Admin Building, Room 113) at 0800 on Saturday, 16 October.

I've just received the November SWEs and will be sending an e-mail to everyone whose exam I've received. If you haven't received an e-mail invitation to the SWE by Friday, 15 October, contact me immediately. The exams will be administered on Thursday, 04 November. Details will be in the e-mail.

CG Foundation & Vander Putten Grants

The Coast Guard Institute has exhausted all 2010 funds for the Coast Guard Foundation Education and Vander Putten Grants. No additional funds are expected to be available until CY2011.

For these reasons, please don't submit any more applications this calendar year.

If an application you submitted earlier this year has not been processed, you will receive an email informing you to resubmit your application after 01 January 2011.

College Info

Periodically, the TraCen Cape May's Education Center receives flyers, brochures, posters, and other information from colleges and universities around the country which are hoping to tap into the military market. This information is available for browsing any time during working hours (including lunch time). ***The fact that this information is available does not constitute an endorsement of the corresponding schools or programs.***

Here are some recent offerings from regionally-accredited schools with tuition well under the max allowed by tuition assistance.

Bismarck State College in North Dakota is unusual in having six engineering-type degree programs you can pursue on-line, as well as seven non-engineering programs. Here they are:

- Associate of Arts (emphasis in criminal justice)
- Associate in Applied Science (power plant technology, process plant technology, electric power technology, nuclear power technology, electrical transmission systems technology, criminal justice, human services, management, geographic information systems, web page development & design, and information processing specialist)
- Bachelor of Applied Science (energy management)

Tuition costs between \$176 and \$227 per semester credit (depending on the major). For more information, go to <http://bscmilitaryonline.com/default.asp> or drop by the Education Center for hard-copy info.

Brigham Young University's Independent Study guide describes dozens of university-level, high school, middle school, and personal enrichment courses. These courses are available either in a paper format or on-line. Tuition for both types of university-level courses is \$148 per semester credit, with an additional flat \$10 fee for paper-based courses. High school course credit is based on Carnegie Units and tuition is \$124 per ½ credit or \$78 per ¼ credit. And personal enrichment courses cost \$48 per ½ credit, with an additional flat \$10 fee for paper-based courses. For more information, drop by the Education Center to look through the Independent Study guide or go to <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/>.

Use Credit-by-Exam Tests to Raise Your GPA

Many Guardians are unaware that while CLEP tests and DSST exams may be accepted by your college as credit toward your major, the scores you get will not be used to compute your GPA. (Every college/university decides for itself whether to accept these tests as credit toward their degrees.)

EXAMPLE: Your college requires you to complete 6 credits in humanities courses, 6 in math courses, 6 in science courses, 6 in social sciences and history courses, and 6 in science courses. You don't think you'll do all that well in the math and science courses, but you know you'll pass.

If you pass the CLEP Natural Sciences and College Math tests (and your school accepts those as credit toward your major) your CLEP test scores will not be included when your GPA is calculated; it'll be based only on actual courses you took. Assuming you do well in your courses, this means your GPA will be higher than it would have been if you'd taken science and math courses and got relatively low grades in them.

You can use this technique with any of the 72 CLEP tests and DSSTs: pass a test rather than take a course you don't think you'll do well in. Just make sure your school will accept the score from the test you take toward your chosen major.

Considering a Health Services Career?

Are you interested in any of the following health services careers?

- dietetics
- medical engineering
- medical record administration
- physician assistant
- nursing
- pharmacy

- sanitary science
- computer science
- dental hygiene
- medical laboratory technology
- therapy (e.g., occupational, physical, speech-language pathology, or audiology).

If so, you might want to look into the Public Health Service's Junior and Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Programs (JRCOSTEP and SRCOSTEP, <http://www.usphs.gov/student/>). These programs offer "two excellent opportunities for students to serve their country while completing their education."

If you have questions about either of these programs, feel free to join one of the following (all times Eastern Time):

15 October 2010 @ 1500
22 October 2010 @ 1000
05 November 2010 @ 1300
17 November 2010 @ 1200
07 December 2010 @ 1300
17 December 2010 @ 1100
21 December 2010 @ 1000
29 December 2010 @ 1500

To participate, call 866-705-5819 and enter the passcode 1633181.

For more information on the PHS Commissioned Corps, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oprograms.asp#phs>.

Get Certified or Licensed While in Uniform

Did you know that your GI Bill education benefit program will reimburse you for the cost of license and certification exams (up to \$2,000 per exam)? It's true!

If you're eligible for benefits under the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP (or if you gave up one of these to get benefits under the new GI Bill), you can take an unlimited number of license and certification tests as long as you're eligible for GI Bill benefits. That means as long as you haven't exhausted your 36 months of GI Bill benefits, you can get reimbursed for licensing and/or certification tests.

If you're eligible for new GI Bill benefits and didn't give up one of the others, you can take only one test during your eligibility period.

What kinds of tests fall under this benefit? Here are a few:

- Lawyer license (aka bar) exam
- C++ certification
- HVAC journeyman certification
- Accreditation in Public Relations certification
- Cosmetology license
- Safety professional certification
- Dental assistant license
- Residential mechanical inspector certification

To find out if the test you want to take qualifies for reimbursement, go "Search for Approved License and Certification Programs" on the Department of Veterans' Affairs's web site (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/resources/education-resources/find-a-school.html>).

And for more information on what you have to do to get reimbursed and how much time is deducted from your 36-month GI Bill entitlement, see your ESO.

E-PME Performance Requirements

When you're ready to take an E-PME Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE), remember that in accordance with ALCOAST 179/05, ESOs are not authorized to administer AQEs to individuals whose supervisors (or division officers) have not certified that they have completed the E-PME Performance Requirements. They provide this certification via a signature on the statement in the "Remarks" section at the bottom of page 2, which reads as follows:

I certify that the person named below satisfactorily completed all EPME performance requirements and related course work for pay grade E-_____ and is eligible to take the Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE).

You can download the current from http://www.uscg.mil/forms/cg/CG_1510_2.pdf, (Unfortunately, the Coast Guard Learning Portal still has only the older/obsolete version of the form available.)

Unabridged List of Distance Learning Colleges

At last, there appears to be an unbiased unabridged list of distance learning colleges. To quote the web site:

Online Colleges is a nonprofit resource website which maintains the largest database of online colleges on the web.

As a nonprofit, we accept no sponsorships or payments of any kind, and as a result our database of 343 colleges remains a comprehensive and unbiased resource for students.

Check it out at <http://www.onlinecolleges.org/>.

Free Tutoring

If you haven't yet discovered it and are trying to prepare for a CLEP test, DSST, SAT, ACT, or college course or want help with a civilian job search, preparing a civilian resume, or financial questions, check out tutor.com on Navy Knowledge Online (<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>). Once you've logged in, click on the "Reference" tab and you'll see a section for tutor.com.

There, you can find on-line tutorials for many subjects in the areas of math, science, English, and social studies as well as standardized test preparation (e.g., SAT, ACT, GRE), and adult services such as resume preparation, job search, helping children with homework, etc. You can also find live tutoring on the same site.

This is an EXCELLENT resource!!

Aviation-related Degrees

If you're interested in a post-Coast Guard career in aviation or if you're currently in Coast Guard aviation and would like to get a degree related to what you're now doing, you should know there are a number of accredited colleges and universities around the country which offer these degrees, some by distance learning. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (<http://worldwide.erau.edu/index.html>) is the most widely known of these. But there are others with equally good programs such as Mercer County Community College (<http://www.mccc.edu/aviation/>) in New Jersey and Utah Valley University (<http://uvu.edu/aviation/>).

Before you set your mind on one school over another, do your homework; compare what each school has to offer – including a price within your financial aid limits. To keep track of what you find out about each school, and for ease of comparison, use the college comparison worksheet (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf>).

Thinking of Starting Your Own Business?

If you're thinking about starting your own business, either while you're still in uniform or after you leave the Coast Guard, check out a sampling of resources for entrepreneurs at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/smallbiz.asp>. There you'll find general resources applicable to all types of small businesses on many different subjects (e.g., drafting a business plan, finding funding, etc.).

There are also sections aimed at those interested in starting not-for-profit businesses and those interested in social entrepreneurship. Contrary to the popular notion, not-for-profit doesn't mean "no profit" or that you can't earn a substantial salary. It just means most of the profit has to be put toward specific things, usually plowed back into the business. There's also a section with links to labor market information.

Finally, drop by the Education Center to pick up a copy of the book *Best Career and Education Web Sites*. Chapters 7 ("Self-Employment and Small Business") and 8 ("Temporary Work, Contract Employment, Freelancing, Teleworking, and Volunteering") have many great leads.

Free On-line Skill-Development 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.

Free On-line College Courses

If you're interested in taking a college course, but don't want to pay for it or don't need credit for it, check out the resources listed on my web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp>). The links you'll find there are to the main web site for the college/university which offers the courses. And if you'd like to find free courses sorted by subject matter, go to http://education-portal.com/article_directory/Free_Online_Courses_and_Education.html.

These courses are great for studying for CLEP and DSST exams, but remember: you will not earn college credit from these courses by themselves.

Choosing a College or University

In early August, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report describing the results of an undercover investigation of for-profit colleges and universities, especially their recruiting practices – how they get students to sign up. You can find a summary of the report (with hidden-camera videos) and links to report highlights and the full report at <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-948T>.

Although the report didn't name specific schools, other sources have discovered them and you can read which they are (as well as an article about the report) at <http://www.collegescholarships.org/blog/2010/08/07/for-profit-colleges-accused-of-misleading-students-with-false-information/>. National Public Radio (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129259157>) also covered this issue and others (including the higher cost of for-profits for comparable degrees).

PLEASE do some research about colleges before you spend your time (and the Coast Guard's money) on any degree or certificate program. One of the GAO investigation's findings most germane to Guardians is that, on average, it costs between 6 and 13 times more to obtain a degree from a for-profit college than from a publicly-funded college.

Even if tuition assistance is paying for your courses, the less expensive they are the more courses you can take on your fixed \$4,500 TA allowance every year. So why take a course at a college that's going to charge you many times what you can take the same course for elsewhere?

The bottom line is: don't even provide contact information until you've researched the institution you're focusing on. Beware of schools which

- pressure you to enroll,
- call you at all hours of the day and night to ask if you've made a decision,
- tell you you shouldn't worry about the cost (since TA or your GI Bill will cover it), or
- try to talk you into taking out loans.

Schools which do these things are more interested in their balance sheets than in your education.

Be a smart consumer before you become a student.

TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Mondays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

Tuesdays (0800): EOCTs and AQEs*

Thursdays (0745): college tests, CLEP tests, DSSTs, SATs, ACTs

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

This schedule leaves most of the day on Tuesdays, as well as all day on Wednesdays, Fridays available for other occasional tests, counseling, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, the doors to the Education Center are open on Mondays, as well.

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

Thinking of Teaching?

Are you interested in teaching after you leave the Coast Guard? Troops to Teachers also provides counseling and referral services to military personnel interested in beginning a second career in public education as a teacher. And the DANTES Troops to Teachers office will help you identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification, and employment opportunities. The main web site (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/index.asp) has all kinds of information about the program. Including a new on-line way to determine if you're eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers: http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/troopstoteachers/eligibility.asp.

Leaving the Coast Guard?

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

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

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

Microsoft Software Home Use Program

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

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

ACCC's Library Open for Studying

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

Quick Reference Study Guides

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

Education Center Library

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

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