

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #348

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## Question of the Week

**Q:** I'm filling out a request for TA using the Navy's eTA web site. One of the questions I have to answer is, "Do you have a SOCCOAST agreement?" What's a SOCCOAST agreement and how would I know if I have one?

**A:** Essentially, a SOCCOAST agreement is a combination of a degree plan from your school and a contract between your school and you. It lays out the courses you have to complete to get your degree, which courses you've completed, and which courses you still have to complete. It sets in stone which courses and how many credits you have to take to get your degree, so if the school changes the degree requirements before you've received your degree you'll only have to complete the courses shown on your SOC agreement.

SOC schools are supposed to provide military students with SOC agreements automatically once they've completed the required residency requirement and no more than 25% of the credits required to earn the target degree. For example, if you're pursuing a 60-credit associate degree, the school's supposed to provide a SOC agreement when you've completed 15 credits.

If you've completed the residency requirement and the school hasn't provided you with a SOC agreement, you should ask for one. If the school demurs or refuses, you should report this to your ESO who will report it to the SOCCOAST representative.

If you have a question you'd like answered as a Question of the Week, e-mail it to me at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Web Page in the Spotlight

There's a lot of stuff on the TraCen Cape May web site you might not check out if you didn't know it was there. So this week, I'm spotlighting **Civilian Employment** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/civemp.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused/mispronounced words. This week: **affect** and **effect**.

The word *affect* is a verb: “Coast Guard modernization won’t directly affect my unit” and “Supply and demand affect gas prices.”

The word *effect* is most often used as a noun: “Her personal life has no effect on me” and “The effects of the war in Afghanistan are tragic.”

HOWEVER, *effect* can also be used as a verb: “The new OIC effected many changes when she took charge.”

Keep in mind this memory aid: the word *cause* is often paired with the word *effect*; the final letter of the word *cause* is the first letter of *effect*.

If there are any word usage, grammar, or similar issues you’ve encountered, please e-mail them to me at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## Trying to Compare Distance-Learning Colleges?

(courtesy of Troy Blappert, full-time ESO at Base Seattle)

If you’re interested in taking college courses for the first time, often your first challenge is to find a school that meets your needs and wants. A web site – “College Choices for Adults” – seeks “to provide you with the data you need to select a college best suited to help you earn your degree in the distance education setting that works with your busy schedule.”

You can search for schools offering a specific major or degree program and you can get a side-by-side comparison of data from up to three schools at a time. Check it out at <http://www.collegechoicesforadults.org/>.

## Are You a Military Veteran Seeking Federal Employment?

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has a veterans’ employment web site called “Feds Hire Vets” (<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>). Its purpose is to implement the federal government’s strategy for recruiting and employing military veterans. It’s intended to be the preeminent source for federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and their families.

And (courtesy of Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle) the state of Maryland also has a similar site called the Military to Federal Jobs Crosswalk (Mil2FedJobs, <http://www.mil2fedjobs.com/>) to help you “translate military occupations to federal jobs”.

## New MST RPQs/RATs & the May 2012 SWE

It may seem premature to be talking about the May 2012 SWE, but to qualify to take it you have to have all requirements completed by 01 February 2012 – less than five months from now. The MST RPQ is totally different from the previous PQG, and the paper end-of-course tests (EOCTs) have been replaced by on-line RATs, which not all ESOs are currently authorized to administer. **PLAN AHEAD!!!**

For MST3s to qualify to take the MST2 SWE, they must have completed the MST2 RPQ and passed the MST2 RAT.

For MST2s to qualify to take the MST1 SWE, they must have completed the MST1 RPQ and passed the MST1 RAT. MST2s who’ve already passed the paper MST1 EOCT are exempt from the MST1 RAT requirement, but they must have completed the MST1 RPQ. (RPQs are available for download from the Learning Management System (<https://elearning.uscg.mil/>) under “Enlisted Advancement”.)

Finally, to take the May 2012 SWE (and all subsequent SWEs) all MSTs must also have core competencies as described in paragraph 7.A. of ALCOAST 033/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST033-11.pdf>).

## FY12 Tuition Assistance Requests

If you have a course that begins on or after 01 October, it will be funded with FY12 money. For reasons having to do with Navy's on-line TA application system and finances, you can't use eTA/WebTA (<https://eta.cnet.navy.mil/>) before 01 October to apply for TA for courses which begin in FY12.

If you need to get TA approved before 01 October for a course that begins after 01 October, please use the PDF application form ([http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG\\_Form\\_4147.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_4147.pdf)) rather than eTA to submit your TA request. The Coast Guard Institute will process your request as soon as funds become available.

## College Cost Information

(courtesy of Mr. Brion Newman, full-time ESO at Base Seattle)

The U.S. Department of Education has created some new web sites to help college students and their parents figure out the costs of attending U.S. colleges and universities.

- College Affordability and Transparency Center (<http://collegecost.ed.gov/catc/Default.aspx>) – “Here you will find information about tuition and net prices at postsecondary institutions. The site highlights institutions with high and low tuition and fees as well as high and low net prices (the price of attendance minus grant and scholarship aid). It also shows institutions where tuition and fees and net prices are increasing at the highest rates.”
- State Spending Charts (<http://collegecost.ed.gov/statespending.aspx>) – “Here you will find summary information on changes in state appropriations for postsecondary education, state aid for students, and tuition and fees.”
- 90/10 Information (<http://collegecost.ed.gov/9010info.aspx>) – “Here you will find a list of for-profit (proprietary) postsecondary institutions that receive more than 90 percent of their revenues from Title IV Federal Student Aid.”

## Officer Program Application Submission Deadlines

The FY12 message from the Coast Guard Recruiting Command (CGRC) describing the various officer programs, eligibility requirements, and submission deadlines was published on Monday, 08 August 2011 (ALCGRECRUITING 010/11, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/alcgrecurring010-11.pdf>).

If you're going to be submitting your application through TraCen Cape May, you can ignore the first column in paragraph 3 (“ESO Deadline”). Instead, I'll need your completed application no later than a week before the “RO Deadline” (in the second column). This will give you a bit of extra time to work on it.

While I'll be glad to help you understand what's required, I will not review or edit your narrative memo or review your completed application folder. I trust that anyone applying for an officer program can figure out (with the help of information provided by CGRC and my web site, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/oapp.asp>) which documents they need to include and what needs to go where in the folder. That's what junior officers are expected to do. The amount of someone else's advice on wording, syntax, grammar, or organization you incorporate into your memo reduces the percentage of the text that's your product. As much as I want you to succeed, the application is supposed to reflect your thoughts, efforts, and abilities not mine or anyone else's.

## Officer Program Application Assistance

If you're applying to a Coast Guard officer program and would like someone with an unbiased eye to review your narrative memo, contact TraCen Cape May's Public Affairs Officer, LTJG Michael Cole ([michael.h.cole@uscg.mil](mailto:michael.h.cole@uscg.mil)).

LTJG Cole is a professional writer, when not performing his Coast Guard Reserve duties. His first of three novels will be published in February 2012 by Penguin-Putnam (the largest publisher in the U.S.). These follow on the heels of many articles and short-stories (for more info, see his web site at [www.mykecole.com](http://www.mykecole.com)).

## Have You Checked Your PDE?

The message with details on the November SWE was published on 29 July 2011 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGENL140-11.pdf>). Anyone who plans on taking this SWE should read it carefully. **Particularly important is paragraph 4.A., describing the would-be examinee's responsibilities.**

For those who've never taken a SWE before (or those who may have forgotten), if you met all the qualifications (as laid out on your Personal Data Extract or PDE) by 01 August 2011, PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on the PDE. **Neither you nor your ESO can request a SWE.**

Make sure you check **everything** on your PDE carefully **before 01 October** – including your examination board name and OPFAC.

- Are you going to be on leave or TAD on the date of your SWE?
- Will you be in-transit due to a PCS move on the date of your SWE?
- Are you going to be away from the unit listed on your PDE for any other reason on the date of your SWE?

If so, do the following:

- find a unit you know you'll be geographically near on your SWE date,
- contact the ESO at that unit and ask if it's OK to take your SWE there,
- assuming the ESO says "yes", ask for the unit's OPFAC,
- let your SPO know what the name and OPFAC of that unit so PSC knows to change your PDE.

PSC will automatically send your exam to the unit list as your exam board on your PDE.

**Substitute exams are not authorized except in emergencies over which you have no control.** Regular leave (even if you scheduled a Caribbean cruise six months ago) is not an emergency. A wedding – even your own – is not an emergency. For more information on just which circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 5.D.3. of the *Personnel Manual*.

If you revise the PDE info concerning your exam site and later find out you won't be able to take your exam there after all or at the scheduled date and time, let your ESO know ASAP.

## New GM1 & GM2 Courses & Tests

ALCOAST 395/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST395-11.pdf>) announced new GM1 and GM2 courses and EOCTs, based on the most current EPQs (CG-3303C-GM) which you can download from the Learning Management System (<https://elearning.uscg.mil/>) under "Enlisted Advancement".

Completion of relevant EPQs is required before you can take either the GM2 or GM1 EOCT and passing the EOCT is required to take the May 2012 SWE and all subsequent SWEs.

## New IS2 Course & Test

ALCOAST 378/11 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST378-11.pdf>) announced a new IS2 course and EOCT, based on the most current EPQs (CG-3303C-IS) which you can download from the Learning Management System (<https://elearning.uscg.mil/>) under "Enlisted Advancement".

Completion of the EPQs is required before you can take the EOCT, and passing the EOCT is required to take the May 2012 SWE and all subsequent SWEs.

Keep in mind that the IS2 course is For Official Use Only (FOUO). That being the case, you may only use it in a secure space at work and when you're not using the course it must be stored at work in a locked container.

## No More Paper & Pencil CLEP Tests

The number of CLEP tests (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/clep.asp>) ESOs who are DANTES Test Control Officers can administer has declined over the last few years to the point where they can now only administer 14 of the 34 tests. At the end of this calendar year, ESOs will no longer be able to administer any CLEP tests and no orders for tests may be placed after 01 October 2011.

To quote from the official announcement, "The College Board has decided to terminate this service due to the decreasing number of PPT test takers. Over 95 percent of military examinees test on the CLEP computer-based exams either at an onbase or on-campus national test center. The Service members utilizing the computer-based exams benefit from instant score results and access to all 33 CLEP eCBT test titles. . . ."

Because the closest test site for computer-based tests is Rowan University (in Glassboro, NJ), I'm working to find alternatives for Coast Guard personnel in southern New Jersey. It's unlikely my efforts will bear fruit before the end of the year, however.

## Writing Workshop & Editing Help

TraCen Cape May's Public Affairs Officer, LTJG Michael Cole has offered to hold a writing workshop, help out with writing-related assignments, and assist in editing/proofreading.

LTJG Cole is a professional writer, when not performing his Coast Guard Reserve duties. His first of three novels will be published in February 2012 by Penguin-Putnam (the largest publisher in the U.S.). These follow on the heels of many articles and short-stories (for more info, see his web site at [www.mykecole.com](http://www.mykecole.com)).

Contact him at [michael.h.cole@uscg.mil](mailto:michael.h.cole@uscg.mil) to discuss any writing-related issues you may want help with.

## Service Obligations After Using TA

Current Coast Guard rules and (with respect to officers) federal law impose various service obligations on those who use tuition assistance.

- For enlisted personnel, the only requirement is that you complete a course paid for with TA funds before you leave the Coast Guard (whether by retiring, RELAD, end of enlistment, or whatever).
- Officers incur obligations of different lengths depending on whether they're regulars or in the Selected Reserve. Regular officers incur a 2-year obligation from the date they complete a TA-paid course; Reserve officers incur a 4-year obligation.
- Civilian Coast Guard employees incur a one-month obligation for every credit paid for by TA.

For officers and civilians, the period of obligated service is consecutive, not cumulative. That is, it extends from the ending date of the last course paid for with TA.

## Thinking about Law School?

If you're thinking you might want to go to law school and are wondering what you should major in for your undergraduate degree or what courses you should take in a general/liberal studies program, check out the following links:

- [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/pre\\_law.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html)
- <http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/courses.html>
- <http://advising.wayne.edu/curr/prelwf05.php>
- <http://gradschool.about.com/od/lawschool/f/lawclass.htm>
- [http://www.chsbs.cmich.edu/Law\\_Center/](http://www.chsbs.cmich.edu/Law_Center/)

Before you start down this path, however, you should get to know a lawyer who does the type of work you think you want to do and arrange to shadow him/her for a few days. Only this way will you get a real taste of what a lawyer does day in and day out and get a better idea of whether that's what you want to do.

Also, please read the article "The Creation of Legal Dependency: Law School in a Nutshell" by two professors who received degrees from Stanford University's law school (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/LawSchool01.pdf>). And, in a more humorous vein, see if you can find a copy of *29 Reasons Not to Go to Law School* by Ralph Warner and Toni Ihara, founders of Nolo Press – a highly-successful publisher of self-help law books (<http://www.nolo.com/>).

If you're just interested in the subject matter (e.g., contracts, torts, criminal law, property law, corporations law, family law, etc.) and don't necessarily want to practice law, you can take individual undergraduate courses which will give you working knowledge of the various subjects, although (perhaps) not as much depth of knowledge as you'd get in law school. Or you might be interested in either a complete paralegal program or in just taking individual paralegal courses.

And, finally, it should go without saying that attending law school entails a serious financial commitment for most people. To put the costs into perspective, consider this, from "Paying for Law School" at <http://www.admissionsdean.com/>. (These figures do not include living expenses.)

- For more than a decade, the average cost of attending law school has increased much faster than the rate of inflation.
- According to a Government Accountability Office report, the average debt for a private law school student is nearing \$100,000.
- The cost of three years of law school can easily exceed \$150,000.
- From 1997 to 2007, the median resident public law school tuition increased from \$2,124 to \$14,313, the median non-resident public tuition increased from \$5,706 to \$26,432, and the median private tuition increased \$8,690 to \$32,168.

Finally, when looking for a law school keep in mind that if it's not accredited by the American Bar Association, you won't be able to take a bar exam and practice law outside the state in which the school's located and may not be able to take that state's bar exam or be able to practice law in that state. Check the bar admission requirements of the state in which you want to practice ([http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/bar\\_admissions.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/bar_admissions.html)) to find out whether the school you're thinking about will enable you to take the bar exam or practice law there. There are currently no distance learning law schools which are ABA-accredited.

The bottom line is: know what's in the water and at the bottom before jumping into the lake.

## On-line College Language Courses

If you're interested in taking one or more language courses on-line and either don't want to or can't afford to use those which are commercially available, check out the dozens of courses available from many different regionally-accredited colleges and universities throughout the country.

The DANTES Independent Study Catalog

(<http://www.dantescatalogs.com/DISCSubjectAreas.aspx?MajorSubjectArea=PC>) lists them, gives a short description of what they entail, and lists all costs associated with them. Tuition assistance (TA) can be used to pay for all or most costs of all these courses and you'll earn college credit for them as well.

If you're specifically interested in Spanish, another option comes from Ms. Kristi Hilton (full-time ESO at Sector Columbia River). She found courses offered by the University of Texas at <http://courses.webhost.utexas.edu/dec/college/searchresults.cfm>. You'll also earn college credit for these courses and the cost is only \$147.60/credit. If you want to use TA, there's a "Military Tuition Assistance" option on the payment page. If you run into snags trying to use TA to pay for the course, the school's Registrar, Ms. Carol Tremaine (at 512-471-2906), will answer any questions you have about the procedure.

## Using Your GI Bill Education Benefit

Although there are many differences among the various GI Bill education programs (MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, REAP, Post-9/11 GI Bill), there are also a number of similarities. The main similarity people seem not to understand concerns the 36

months of benefits. These 36 months have **absolutely nothing** to do with the amount of time you have to use your benefit. It's merely a way of keeping track of how much of your benefit you have left.

Everyone, under all the programs, starts out with 36 months of benefits. You can use your benefits consecutively without a break or over many periods with breaks between them within the allotted usage period (which varies from program to program). For every day you're using your benefit (assuming you're going to school or undergoing training full-time), one day will be deducted from your initial 36 month benefit. If you're not going full-time, a fraction of a day will be deducted for each day you're using your benefit.

**EXAMPLE 1:** If you're going to college full-time and take one semester (103 days) of courses, 103 days will be deducted from your 36 months (1,080 days) of benefits, leaving you with approximately 977 days of benefits. As you take more courses, more days will be deducted until you have zero days of the benefit left.

**EXAMPLE 2:** If you're in a half-time vocational training program (4 hours per day), half a day will be deducted for each day you're receiving benefits.

You can take as much time off as you like from school or training and you'll still have however much time you had when you last stopped using the benefit (i.e., 36 months minus however many days of the benefit you've used up to that time).

The allotted usage periods for the four programs named above are as follows:

- MGIB-AD – 10 years from the last day you served on active duty for more than 90 days (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-30.asp>)
- MGIB-SR – until you leave the Selected Reserve (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-1606.asp>)
- REAP – 10 years from your discharge from the Selected Reserve with an honorable discharge (generally) (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-reap.asp>)
- Post-9/11 GI Bill – 15 years from the last day you served on active duty for more than 90 days (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33o.asp>)

## Career & Education Planning Tools

Many people in the Coast Guard – military and civilians alike – are unsure of what career fields best match their personal interests and abilities. While you might be extremely competent at what you're doing in the Coast Guard, you might have skills you'd rather put to use in some other field. ESOs throughout the Coast Guard (including TraCen Cape May's) have access to many different tools you can use to assess your interests and possible ways to earn a living while pursuing those interests.

For more information, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/discover.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sitestest.asp>.

## How to Go to College Almost for Free

Whether you'd like more money for your own education (even if you're using TA or receiving GI Bill benefits) or for a dependent, you should check out <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp#strategy>. You'll see that finding money for college *is* possible using a logical, linear (and not all that daunting) methodology devised by Ben Kaplan.

Also, the Education Center recently acquired Mr. Kaplan's video, "Finding College Cash in Tough Times" (<http://www.cityofcollegedreams.org/store/finding-college-cash-in-tough-times>). After a short introduction it covers the following topics:

- Part I: Exploding 3 Myths about Paying for College
- Part II: 3 Strategies for Maximizing Need-based Financial Aid
- Part III: 3 Steps for Finding Merit Scholarships
- Part IV: 3 Components of a Winning Scholarship Game Plan
- Part V: 3 Strategies for Making Your Application Shine
- Part VI: Concluding Thoughts & Final Quiz

Although I can't lend out the video, you can watch it in the Education Center. Please contact me ([andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil)) if you're interested in seeing it. The total running time is 71 minutes. If there's enough interest to warrant it, we'll show it in the auditorium; otherwise, in the Education Center.

## Is Distance Learning for You?

Because of its convenience (no need to leave the house to attend classes), distance learning appeals to working people – especially to military personnel. This fact means many Coast Guard personnel (who are often not near large population centers) have opportunities for higher education they might not have had in the past.

But before you plunk down the application fee for a distance learning course, check out the information about distance learning at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp>. And before you hop on the on-line course bandwagon, spend a little time with the University of Georgia's on-line assessment tool to help you determine if computer-based distance learning is for you (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#01>).

## Civilian 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!

## Reserve Resource Guide

In addition to the web site of the Coast Guard Office of Reserve Affairs (<http://www.uscg.mil/reserve/>), Reservists should also check out TraCen Petaluma's Reserve Resource Guide (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/tracenpetaluma/RRG/>). Together, these provide info on and links to info on every facet of Coast Guard affairs related to service in the Reserve.

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

## 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>).

Also, stop by the Education Center to check out the (small) supply of booklets related to rejoining the civilian work force. Here are the topics of the booklets:

- Jobs With a Future
- How to Develop Job Resources
- The Resume
- The Cover Letter: A Resume Should Never Stand Alone
- The Mature Resume: The Resume with Experience
- The Follow-up Letter
- The Interview
- How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment
- Civilian Again
- Leaving the Service ... and Beginning Your Next Career
- Military to Civilian: Your Resume and Job Hunt
- Effective Goal Setting: How to Reach the Goals You Set for Yourself

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 (or a transcript) 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>).

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.

## Education Center Library

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

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