

TraCen Cape May Education Update #276

In this Update:

- Congratulations!!!
- Question of the week
- Frequently confused words
- GI Bill application processing
- CG Foundation grants
- Difficulty with eTA log-in?
- *Military Times* Edge
- Beware of “military friendly” schools
- Continuing education courses
- New law standardizes in-state tuition rules
- Vocational courses & financial aid
- TraCen Cape May testing calendar
- CG Institute eliminates degree planning
- Skillsoft: free on-line courses, hundreds of subjects
- Studying for CLEP Math/English test (or ASVAB)?
- New tuition assistance authorization procedure
- Language software reimbursement
- CG spouse college grant
- CG Exchange System scholarships
- Free SAT & ACT prep software
- Career myths
- Thinking of teaching?
- Leaving the Coast Guard?
- Miscellaneous

Congratulations!!

Name	Work Site	Test
FNDC Shari Guerra	SFO Atlantic City	DC3
MK3 Anthony Tipton	CGC Mako	MK2*
SNYN David Nelson	Station Cape May	YN3*
SKC Alberto Peralta	TraCen (recruit trng)	E-PME-8*
IT2 Joshua Kistler	ESD Cape May	E-PME-6
FS2 Roy Snyder	CGC Ibis	E-PME-6

* First time taking test

Well done, all of you!!

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

Question of the Week

Q: Does the Coast Guard have a program that will repay my student loans or can I use the GI Bill to repay them?

A: Currently, the Coast Guard has no student loan repayment program. Also, the GI Bill programs are not student loan repayment programs. The only way you could use GI Bill benefits to pay off student loans would be if you were enrolled in the MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, or REAP and sent the monthly GI Bill payments you received to your lender.

The only way benefits under the new GI Bill can be used for student loan repayment is if you're receiving the housing allowance (only available to those not on active duty) and/or the book stipend. These are paid directly to you, the student.

The difficulty with either of these is that you must be taking college courses to receive any of these benefits.

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: **appraise** and **apprise**.

The word **appraise** is a verb meaning to set a value on or evaluate the worth, significance, or status of something: "The antiques dealer appraised the value of the vase" and "The professor appraised the essay to be a plagiarism."

The word **apprise** is also a verb, but means to give notice: "She apprised me of the fact I had left my lights on" and "The CO told the OOD to keep her apprised of the movements of the ship on the horizon."

GI Bill Application Processing

If you sent in your application to activate your GI Bill benefit (MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, REAP, or new GI Bill) recently or not so long ago, you may be wondering when you can expect to receive your Letter of Eligibility. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has always quoted a processing time of between 3 and 4 months. You may get it a bit earlier, but don't be surprised if it takes even longer than 4 months.

Coast Guard Foundation Grants

The Coast Guard Institute is once again accepting applications for the Coast Guard Foundation Education Grants and Vander Putten Education Grants programs.

All applications must be dated with the current (2010) date. Recycled applications with a date from last year will not be accepted. HOWEVER, you can clear the original date, re-date the application, and re-submit it.

Receipts must not be dated more than a year before the date the Institute receives the application. That is, if your application reaches the Institute on 20 January 2010, receipts can't be dated before 20 January 2009. Also, receipts must include a description of the item purchased and must show proof of payment. Copies of receipts must be legible and if you send original receipts, they will not be returned.

Difficulty with eTA Log-in?

If trying to create and submit a tuition assistance request and are having a problem logging in on eTA, please contact the eTA help desk at 877-253-7122. When the voice menu begins, select option 2 then option 1. Or you can e-mail the help desk at netc.helpdesk@navy.mil.

If you can't get things fixed via the eTA help desk, send me an e-mail with a detailed description of what you're experiencing when you try to log in and a screen shot of the error message.

Military Times Edge

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

- Recipe for Success: retired soldier transforms hobby into fruitful business
- Hook some Help: supplement Uncle Sam with these military-only scholarships
- The Job Searchers: Hiring help on your hunt for a new career
- One Year to a New Career: 12 thing you can do in 2010 to find a job you love
- Unfit for Command: How to deal with a bad military boss

- Five Golden Skills: Every employer wants them – here’s how to get them
- A Head for Business
- And more ...

Beware of “Military Friendly” Schools

You’ve decided it’s time to start working toward a college degree. Your first question is likely to be: “What school should I get my degree from?” Answering this question is likely to be one of the most difficult parts of the college experience – even harder than some courses you’ll take. There are, literally, hundreds of degree-granting institutions in the U.S. How do you find the few that offer what you’re looking for and provide a degree that’s worth having?

First, figure out what you’re looking for. Do you need to sit in class to learn a subject or are you OK with distance learning? (Distance learning courses are those taught other than face-to-face in a classroom setting. See <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp#type> for descriptions of different types of distance learning.) Are future employers likely to reject you because the school you got your degree from wasn’t rigorous enough? Download the “College Comparison Worksheet” (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/Worksheet.pdf>) to get an idea of things to think about.

Although “Choosing a Distance-Learning School” (at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/choosing.asp>) is aimed at people interested in distance learning courses, the items other than course-delivery method good things to consider for any school.

Don’t jump at a school just because it calls itself “military friendly”. This term has become little more than a marketing tool. And there’s no single definition of what the term means. It could mean all courses are offered via distance learning, that academic terms are short, that courses require few prerequisites, that the school accepts transfer credits from virtually any source or courses you barely passed.

All these things sound good to students. But if you’re getting a degree so you’ll be more marketable when you leave the Coast Guard, put yourself in your potential employer’s shoes. If you were looking at an application from someone who got a degree from XYZ University, would you be impressed? Would you feel comfortable hiring someone knowing the courses she took were easy or only lasted five weeks or that she only had to take five courses to earn a bachelor’s degree?

Even though you can get a degree quickly, that degree may not be considered by employers to be of high enough quality. Check out this article (http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/20091230_GI_Bill_of_Goods.pdf) from the 30 December 2009 issue of *BusinessWeek*.

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, drop by the Education Center for a course booklet or go to Cape May Tech's web site at <http://www.capemaytech.com/ContinuingEducation.htm>.

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.

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.

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 available for counseling, AFCT tests, and other face-to-face interactions with you. When no one is taking a language test, Mondays are also open for things.

(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.

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.

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/>.

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.

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.

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.

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](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.