

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #283

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## Questions of the Week

**Q:** If I started TA when payback was one year from the end of the degree program (October 2008) and I ended the degree program on 21 FEB 2010 after payback was increased to two years, do I owe the CG one or two years TA payback?

**A:** Each separate TA authorization carries with it a separate, unrelated service obligation. Those service obligations run concurrently, not consecutively. So, essentially, add two years to the ending date on the last authorization you received and that's the amount of time you have to serve.

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).

## 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: **less** and **fewer**.

Both words are adjectives. **Fewer** usually denotes number. "There were fewer people at the party than she expected", "The grocery store has a separate cash register for shoppers who are buying fewer than 10 items", and "It took fewer than four hours to get there".

**Less** generally denotes amount or degree. "The recipe called for less than a teaspoon of salt", "The bucket held less than he thought it would", "Each file drawer held less than 100 file folders".

There are exceptions, but here's a general rule for figuring out which to use: If you can put it in a container, use **less**. If you can count whatever it is you're talking about, use **fewer**.

If there are any words you often mix up, please e-mail them to me at [andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil](mailto:andrew.g.webb@uscg.mil).

## New 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's the most recent offering from regionally-accredited school:

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute** (*Virginia Tech*) is offering a distance learning master's degree in information technology. This interdisciplinary degree is offered by Virginia Tech's Colleges of Business and Engineering. "[E]ach class session is recorded and remains available for download for at least a week." That means if you miss one of the weekly meetings of your class, you can catch up on the work before the next session.

For more information, go to <http://www.vtmit.vt.edu/> or drop by the Education Center for hard-copy info.

The Education Center also has a file drawer full of literature from a great number of schools. Stop by and browse.

## Forwarding Your SWE to Another Unit

Are you going to be transferring, on leave, or on TAD when your SWE is administered in May (04MAY for the E-5 and E-7 exams; 06MAY for the E-6, E-8, and E-9 exams)? If so, don't forget to annotate your PDE ***before Wednesday, 01 April*** to that effect. Here's how to do it.

Go to your SPO and look at your PDE (just above the signature box) for the passage that reads: "YOUR \_\_\_ SERVICE WIDE EXAM WILL BE MAILED TO THE EXAM BOARD LOCATED AT: \_\_\_\_\_ OPFAC: \_\_\_\_\_." If you want it sent to a different unit, just cross out the printed OPFAC and unit name and write in the OPFAC and name of the unit at which you want to take the test. Then let the YNs in SPO know about the changes you made and you're all set. They'll let the Pay & Personnel Center know about the change and the exam will be sent directly to the unit you want to take it at.

## May 2010 Servicewide Exam

The message describing responsibilities related to the May servicewide exams (SWEs) was published recently (ALCGENL 014/10, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGENL014-10.pdf>). If you're expecting to take a SWE in May, make sure to read this message immediately and carefully.

And if you're expecting to take a SWE at TraCen Cape May (***especially HSWL personnel***), carefully check the Examination Board information on your PDE. If this information is incorrect or missing, immediately advise your SPO as to where you want to take the exam (and provide the OPFAC number of that command).

SWEs for everyone using TraCen Cape May as his/her examination board will be held in the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Building. Once I receive the exams (usually in early April), I'll provide details to everyone for whom I receive an exam.

***If you're expecting to take a SWE in Cape May and don't receive an e-mail from me by mid-April, let me know ASAP!!***

## Local Paralegal Program

If you or someone you know is interested in working as a paralegal, be aware that Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) has a paralegal program approved by the American Bar Association. (For more on the paralegal field in general, go to <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/career.html>.)

To quote from ACCC's catalog and web site, "The program provides General Education courses and paralegal introductory courses, as well as courses giving specific skills in various areas, including, but not limited to, legal research and writing, fact investigation, client contact, document preparation, litigation preparation including tools of discovery, computer literacy, real estate transactions, family law issues, torts and personal injury issues and ethics."

You can earn either of two different degrees through this program: an associate in applied science and an associate in science. (Go to <http://www.atlantic.edu/program/degrees/aasDegrees/paralegalDegree.htm> for a fuller description of the program and list of required courses.)

This course has always been offered only on ACCC's Mays Landing campus. But thanks to the efforts of LeShan Arnold (wife of one of our shipmates), the program coordinator has agreed to offer the paralegal courses at the Cape May Court House campus as well if eight people sign up.

To express your interest in taking courses in Cape May Court House or to find out more about specific courses or the program as a whole, contact Ms. Marilyn Keiner at 609-343-4941 or [keiner@atlantic.edu](mailto:keiner@atlantic.edu).

## Conquering the College Essay (and CG Officer Program Application Narrative)

(from CollegeWeek Live)

Alan Gelb, author of *A Survival Guide for Students*, is speaking Thursday March 25th at 1300 Eastern time at CollegeWeekLive ([http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en\\_CA/guest/app-speakers-a#594417](http://www.collegeweeklive.com/en_CA/guest/app-speakers-a#594417)). His presentation will describe how to use college essays to create a memorable personal narrative and stand out from the rest of the crowd.

***This advice should also be helpful to you if you're applying for a Coast Guard officer program!***

## CollegeWeek Live

If you're the parent of a college-bound student or are otherwise interested in getting good information about college, check out CollegeWeekLive (CWL). CWL is a two-day on-line college fair to help prospective students in their college planning by connecting them with colleges in a live, interactive environment. You'll be able to find information from dozens of colleges and universities on things like admissions, financing, admission test preparation, college visits, and finding the college which best fits your son, daughter, or yourself.

And while it's aimed mainly at students, parents and counselors are also welcome. And you can register for free (as well as check out the speakers, their topics, the schedule, and many other things) at <http://www.collegeweeklive.com/>.

The next CWL will be held from **Wednesday & Thursday, 24-25 March** and it's a really fantastic tool. You can do everything you can do at a physical college fair except physically pick up brochures and shake people's hands. You can ask questions of speakers and school representatives, download information, even chat with current students at various colleges.

## SKs & Other Military Personnel with Financial Management Responsibilities, Check This Out

If you're interested in becoming a Certified Defense Financial Manager (CDFM), you can take the three required exams for free through DAN TES. DAN TES will provide electronic approval for a CDFM exam voucher. If you're approved (first come, first served) and receive a voucher you'd have to take and pass three exams. If you pass all three, you'll receive certification from the American Society of Military Comptrollers (<http://www.asconline.org/certification/cdfm-information/>).

For more information and to obtain a voucher, contact the DAN TES Credentialing Program Manager at [certprog@navy.mil](mailto:certprog@navy.mil) or call 850-451-1111 x3213.

## **GI Bill Hotline Resumes Regular Schedule**

In case you've tried to call the Department of Veterans' Affairs GI Bill hotline over the last few weeks and have found you couldn't get through on Thursdays or Fridays, you now can.

The people who staff the hotline are the same people who review and approve applications for GI Bill benefits, and have been trying to whittle down the backlog of applications. They've apparently done so, and are now available to take calls from Monday through Friday.

In case you don't have it, the numbers for the hotline are 888-442-4551 and 800-527-1000.

## **TA & Unexpected Operational Commitments**

Normally, if you use TA to pay for a college course and then withdraw from the course after the college's full-refund deadline, you have to repay the Coast Guard for any amount not refunded.

However, if you have to withdraw from a course – even after the full-refund deadline – because you're unexpectedly deployed (e.g., in support of relief efforts in Haiti), the repayment requirement may be waived.

The Coast Guard Institute doesn't want you to drop courses, but just wants you to know that if you have to withdraw, you may not have to repay the Coast Guard for it.

To request a waiver, use the form you can find at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/CG4147-1.pdf>.

## **Build Skills for Education Success**

If you're about ready to start taking college courses or want to improve one or more ASVAB scores, check out the Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) from Peterson's. It's designed to help you build your math and verbal skills, which will help you score well on exams and excel in your career – in or out of the Coast Guard.

OASC is available free 24/7 to you and your family on the Internet.

How does it work? You first take an initial test to measure your strengths and weaknesses. Then you'll receive a personalized set of lessons based on your test results. Those lessons will engage you with interactive activities, flash cards, quizzes, and practice tests. Once you've completed all the lessons, you'll take another test to evaluate your progress.

For more information, to register, and to get started, go to <http://www.petersons.com/dantes>.

## **New ME Courses**

Courses and end-of-course tests (EOCTs) for the new ME1 and ME2 ratings are now available. To order a course, e-mail your ESO with your employee ID number.

TraCen Cape May (like many other Coast Guard units) is what's called a "library units". This means it has most tests on hand all the time: there's generally no need to order a test any more. The Coast Guard Institute is sending ME1 and ME2 EOCTs to library units upon request.

## **How Do I Know When My TA Request Has Been Approved?**

Once your eTA application has been approved, you'll receive notification by e-mail from the Coast Guard Institute. To get the authorization (the document you take to your school to pay for your tuition), log on at the same web site you went to

apply for TA (<https://myeducation.netc.navy.mil>) and follow this path: My Tuition Assistance (WebTA) > Existing Applications.

Once on the page entitled, "Existing TA Applications Status Description" click on the word "View" next to the application you submitted. A new page will open. Above the dark blue "Application Status History" line on this new page, click on "Print document" to get your authorization.

## 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.

If you want to take an exam to be licensed in a particular field (such as physical therapy), you can receive a CG Foundation grant for the books you use to prepare for the exam.

Keep in mind that although there are **currently no funds for these grants**, funding is expected to be available in the not-too-distant future. Applications will be processed in the order in which they were received until funds have been exhausted.

## Free Education Pubs!

If you're considering taking college courses, remember that TraCen Cape May's Education Center has many free pubs that you (or your dependents) may find helpful.

In particular, the *DANTES College Career Workbook*, *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*, and *College Success Guide: Top 12 Secrets for Student Success* have a lot of good information for those who have never taken college courses before or are returning to college after a long absence.

If you're comfortable using a computer, but not are unsure how to find college-related information, pick up a copy of *College.edu: Online Resources for the Cyber-Savvy Student* or *Best Career and Education Web Sites*.

If your spouse or children are looking for financial assistance, we have *Don't Miss Out: The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid, Loans and Grants from Uncle Sam: Am I Eligible and for How Much?*, and *Need a Lift?*

In addition to these, you can also pick up info on the various GI Bill programs and brochures with the following titles:

"Using Your Chapter 30 GI Bill Education Benefit While on Active Duty"

"Coast Guard Tuition Assistance"

"Tuition Assistance Top-up Caution"

"I Don't Know What to Major In"

"Is a Business Degree for Me?"

Why Should I Get My Degree from a SOCCOAST School?"

"Is Distance Education Right for You?"

"Selecting the Right Degree and Major"

"Choosing a Distance Learning College"

"Degrees vs. Certificates"

"The Enlisted Professional Military Education System"

"The Supervisor & the Performance Qualification Guide"

And there's more. Any time the door to the Education Center is open, you're welcome to drop in. If you'd like a place to read and eat lunch in quiet, keep the Education Center in mind.

## eTA Application Glitch

If you're applying for tuition assistance (TA) using the on-line eTA system (<https://eta.cnet.navy.mil/>), beware of an issue that may prevent you from submitting your application. Apparently, a number of people have submitted the application as usual only to receive an e-mail from the Coast Guard Institute saying it was rejected.

The problem seems to be related to field #18, "Anticipated Graduation Date". This field is supposed to only be filled in if you're going to be graduating in the next twelve months. But at the moment, if you leave it blank, you may find your application rejected.

So, until further notice, enter in field #18 the course ending date for the course you're requesting TA for.

## Studying for a CLEP Test or DSST?

If you're interested in taking a CLEP test or DSST, keep in mind that these are not gimme tests; you'll likely need to study quite a bit for them to pass. Remember: these are the equivalent to final exams for one or two semesters of college courses.

Among the resources you can use to prepare for these tests are a number listed on my and the Coast Guard Institute's web sites (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp> and [http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/downloads/DANTES\\_exam\\_matrix.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/downloads/DANTES_exam_matrix.pdf)). And don't ignore Peterson's Online Academic Skills Course (OASC), available free to both Coast Guard personnel (military and civilian) and dependents of servicemembers. Check it out at <http://www.petersons.com/dantes/>.

## Coast Guard Foundation Scholarships

The Coast Guard Foundation is soliciting applications for its scholarship program for the 2010-2011 academic school year.

Four different scholarships are part of this program. The scholarship selection committee will take into account a number of considerations including the applicant's scholastic promise, motivation, moral character, leadership qualities, and good citizenship. **The application deadline is 01 April 2010.**

For more information about these academic financial aid opportunities, see ALCOAST 019/10 (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST019-10.pdf>). You can also get an overview of these programs, as well as many other similar programs and opportunities, at the Work-Life web site (<http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/scholarship.asp#foundation>).

## 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

## 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 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](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](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.