

# TraCen Cape May Education Update #341

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## Temporary TraCen Education Center Closure

TraCen Cape May's Education Center will be closed on Friday, 15 July and on Monday and Tuesday, 18-19 July. The ESO will be available as usual on Wednesday, 20 July.

## Question of the Week

**Q:** I'm trying to make sure I have the right E-PME Performance Requirements signed off, but I've found three different versions on Coast Guard web sites. Two are almost identical, although one is dated October 2004 and the other's undated. The third (dated February 2011) is completely different from the other two. Which should I be using?

**A:** You should **not** be using the undated one (which may still be accessible via the CG Portal), since it has no place for your supervisor (“shop chief/division officer”) to verify that you've completed all requirements. A statement to this effect is supposed to be in the REMARKS section on the bottom of page 2.

Neither should you be using the one that's dated February 2011, since this one doesn't go into effect until later this year. When this new/replacement version takes effect, there will no longer be any separate Knowledge Requirements. Also, the Study Guide has been totally revised and will only be available on-line (no paper version any more). But neither the Performance Requirements nor the corresponding Study Guides are to be used until the ALCOAST has been published.

The most current version currently in use – the version you should be using until further notice – is on the Coast Guard Forms Management web site ([http://www.uscg.mil/forms/cg/CG\\_1510\\_2.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/forms/cg/CG_1510_2.pdf)).

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 **Enlisted Professional Military Education** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/epme.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

This feature will touch on grammar and usage questions as well as confused/misused/mispronounced words. This week, *loose* and *lose* (definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

The adjective **loose** has many meanings, but some of the most common are not rigidly fastened or securely attached, not tight-fitting ("I always wear loose shirts when I'm in Puerto Rico") or having worked partly free from attachments ("My fan belt is loose").

The verb **lose** also has many meanings, but among its most common are to miss from one's possession or from a customary or supposed place; to suffer deprivation of; to part with, especially in an unforeseen or accidental manner ("I always lose my keys") and to fail to win, gain, or obtain something ("Her team lost the contest").

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).

## Reserve Servicewide Exam PDEs Now Available

Personal Data Extracts (PDEs) for Reservists eligible to take the October 2011 servicewide exams (SWEs) are now available in DirectAccess. Please make sure you check **everything** on the PDE carefully – including your examination board name and OPFAC. PSC will automatically send a SWE for you to the ESO at the examination board listed on your PDE. **Your ESO has nothing to do with PDEs and you cannot request a SWE.**

- 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 on the date of your SWE for any other reason?

If so (and if you want to take the SWE), 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,
- notify PPC (e-mail address: PPC-DG-ADV) of the name and OPFAC of that unit so the info on your PDE is changed.

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

**Substitute exams are authorized ONLY in emergencies.** 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 what circumstances justify requesting a substitute exam, see Article 5.D.3. of the *Personnel Manual*.

If you change the Exam Board on your PDE and later find out you won't be able to take your SWE at that location, let your ESO know immediately.

ALCGRSV 024/11 lays out the guidelines for the Reserve servicewide exams this year. The exams will be administered on Saturday morning, 15 October 2011. For details (including what is required of all examinees), see the ALCOAST (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCGRSV024-11.pdf>).

For info on studying and test-taking skills, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studying.asp>.

## 15 Seconds to "Read" Your Résumé

Did you know that your résumé is probably going to be scanned for a mere 10 to 15 seconds? If you're applying for a job outside the Coast Guard, you owe it to yourself to read a recent article by a civilian job recruiter (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/resume023.doc>).

And for more short articles on preparing a civilian résumé, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/articles2.asp#01>.

## Free Books Available in Education Center

TraCen Cape May's Education Center recently received a shipment of the book, *50 Best College Majors for a Secure Future* – a \$17.95 value, yours for free!

Also be aware that the Education Center has many more publications, many of which you're free to take. Those marked with an asterisk on the following list are yours for the asking.

- *College.edu\**
- *Online Learning\**
- *Bear's Guide to the Best Education Degrees by Distance Learning*
- *Bear's Guide to Earning Degrees by Distance Learning*
- *Guide to Distance Learning*
- *College Majors that Work: A Step-by-Step Guide to Choosing and Using Your College Major\**
- *Quick Guide to College Majors and Careers\**
- *10 Best College Majors for Your Personality*
- *Book of Majors*
- *Four-Year Colleges*
- *Two-Year Colleges*
- *Handbook of Historically Black Colleges & Universities*
- *Uniformed Services Almanac\**
- *College Handbook*
- *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?\**
- *Scholarship Scouting Report*
- *How to Go to College Almost for Free*
- *Get Free Cash for College*
- *Scholarship Handbook*
- *Scholarships, Grants & Prizes*
- *Financial Aid for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Families*
- *Scholarships, Fellowships, Grants, and Loans*
- *Best Career and Education Web Sites: A Quick Guide to Online Job Search\**
- *College Success Guide\**
- *2011 Guide to Military Friendly Schools\**
- *DANTES College Career Workbook\**

## 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/sitest.asp>.

## More DSST Test Sites

(thanks to Jose Velazquez, Education Services Specialist at PSC)

In addition to national test centers open to anyone (<http://www.getcollegecredit.com/search.html>), military personnel have another venue at which they can take DSST exams which ESOs can't administer (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>). Strayer University offers DSST exams at no charge to servicemembers.

For more information please contact your nearest Strayer University campus (<http://www.strayer.edu/>).

## TA & Dropped/Changed Courses

If you drop a course you're using TA to pay for, remember you have to go down two separate but parallel paths: the school's and the Coast Guard's.

With respect to the school's path, make sure you follow its procedures for dropping a course; don't just stop going to class.

And after you've dropped the course, be sure you let your ESO know. If you don't, the Coast Guard Institute (and Navy) won't have any idea you're not taking it and will expect a grade report after the course ends. When you fail to provide a grade report, two things will happen. First, eTA will be locked (meaning you won't be able to request TA again until it's unlocked). Second, you'll get a series of nastygrams from the Navy telling you to provide a grade report or repay the TA paid to the school for the course. This will happen even if you didn't take the course, even if the school didn't submit a bill to the Navy for payment for the course!

The same is true if anything about your course changes: dates, number of credits, course name, course number, tuition cost – anything. That is, make sure you've done whatever your school requires to be done (if anything) and make sure you send whatever information changed to your ESO along with the previous information. For example, if you couldn't get into a course that's on your authorization and everything but the name of the course is the same, send your ESO the name and number of the course you planned to take as well as the name and number of the course you actually will be taking. She'll have a new authorization generated which will contain the corrected information. That authorization will be sent directly to you and you'll give it to your school.

When you substitute a correct authorization for another one, make sure the people you talk with at your school know that the previous version is no longer any good, that they should shred it (or give it back to you to shred), and that they must send the replacement (not the original version) to the Navy for payment.

## CLEP Composition Test

A year ago, three CLEP English tests were replaced by two new tests.

- English Composition was replaced by College Composition Modular.
- English Composition with Essay was replaced by College Composition.
- Freshman College Composition was replaced by College Composition Modular.

The College Composition test contains multiple-choice items and two mandatory essays which are scored by the people who own the CLEP tests. It is only offered at national test centers ([http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch\\_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp)). That is, ESOs may not administer this test.

The College Composition Modular test contains a multiple-choice section supplemented with an optional essay section that is provided either by your college or CLEP. On this test, the essay section is scored by your college. ESOs who are DANTES Test Control Officers (TCOs) may order the essay section from CLEP only after you've passed the multiple-choice part of the test.

For more information about these tests, go to [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/ex\\_colcomp.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/ex_colcomp.html).

## Military Scholarship Opportunity

Until 02 September 2011, the National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services (NAIMES) is accepting applications for the 2011 Student Spotlight Scholarships. All Coast Guard personnel (regulars and reservists) who are on active duty and are currently pursuing a degree using tuition assistance are eligible to apply.

A \$1,200 cash prize and commemorative plaque will be awarded to the top project in three categories: (1) undergraduate student with less than 60 credits earned; (2) undergraduate student with 60 or more credits; and 3) graduate student.

To demonstrate your academic achievement, the selection committee would like you to address, in any format you select (essay, prose, art, video, etc.) how your military service has contributed to your sense of citizenry. (Art and video projects must be submitted electronically or on DVD.)

You may address the theme from a macro or micro perspective; the key is to identify what you consider your academic accomplishment(s) and then link the accomplishment(s) to your military career. Note: There is not a set minimum or maximum page length for an essay or other written submission.

The application deadline is Friday, 02 September 2011. Application, resume, and project must be submitted online at [www.naimes.org/upload.asp](http://www.naimes.org/upload.asp). Winners will be notified no later than 28 October 2011.

For detailed information about the NAIMES Student Spotlight Scholarship, to go [www.naimes.org/spotlight.asp](http://www.naimes.org/spotlight.asp) or contact Ms. Cheri Arfsten, Director, Military and Veterans Programs, Pikes Peak Community College at 719-502-3054 or [cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu](mailto:cheri.arfsten@ppcc.edu).

## 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.

## Watch Out for Diploma Mills Masquerading as Legitimate Colleges

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

Before responding to an ad or other hype describing how easy it is to get a college degree, check out a web site that will help you figure out if the school you're interested in is a legitimate. "Phony online colleges crank out fake diplomas and phony college degrees at a dizzying pace," one page of the web site's *Diploma Mill Police* page states (<http://www.geteducated.com/diploma-mill-police>).

"Diploma Mills almost always promise a fast college degree based on life experience. GetEducated's online education researchers have prepared these Top 10 Signs of an Online College Degree Mill to help online students protect themselves from this popular online education scam."

In addition to a database of degree/diploma mills, the site provides a way for you to report buy-a-degree scams and has short articles that describe how to recognize a degree/diploma mill, where most are located, whether saying you got your degree on-line is a good idea, a list of fake accrediting agencies, the pros and cons of "life experience on-line degrees", and much more. And, to quote Mr. Blappert, "It also highlights schools that are nationally accredited as opposed to regionally, and it explains the difference and potential drawbacks."

## 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.

## Do I Need a Degree to Get the Job I Want?

Many Coast Guard personnel are more interested in working with their hands (for example, carpentry, gunsmithing, plumbing, locksmithing, electrical work) than they are in sitting in class for five hours a day to get a degree. Still, everyone tells them they need to get a degree to succeed in the civilian labor market so they feel they have to do so.

But before you jump into a degree program, think about your ultimate employment goal and work backwards from it. When planning a car trip, you don't just start driving and hope to end up somewhere you wanted to go. You have a destination in mind and figure out the best route to get there. This should be the way you also plan your career, both in the Coast Guard and in the civilian world.

Let's say you want to work as a video game designer. Assuming you want to work for a company that does nothing but design and market video games, call a half dozen of them and talk with someone who makes hiring decisions in the HR department or the like. Ask what kind of training and/or education they're looking for in new hires. Ask specifically if the people they hire need a degree, a certificate of some kind, or if demonstrated ability (e.g., via a portfolio or other samples of your work) is good enough.

Remember: a college degree requires you to take many courses totally unrelated to your field of interest. Roughly half the courses you take to earn a degree fall into this category. If you're more interested in acquiring the knowledge necessary to start working in the field that interests you, a degree may not be for you.

There are a number of paths you can take once you know whether most likely employers require a degree. You can

- work with someone who has the knowledge you want to acquire (a mentor-protégé or apprenticeship relationship, formal or informal);
- learn it on your own via resources available for free (often on the Internet, see <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/distance.asp#knowledge>);
- take college courses just in your area of interest and, perhaps, earn an academic certificate in the process (see "Academic Certificates" at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/degreedesc.asp#certs>); or
- take non-credit courses that you have to pay for, for example Excelsior College's Professional Development courses (<http://www.excelsior.edu/web/center-for-professional-development>) or the Graduate School's courses (<http://graduateschool.edu/>), which GI Bill education benefits will likely cover.

First find out if a degree is something you need or want. If you don't need a degree, but you want one and/or what you learn will be useful, by all means work toward one. The point is, don't jump into a degree program just because everyone else is doing so.

## 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>).

## Credit-by-Exam Test Preparation

If you're preparing to take a credit-by-exam test (e.g., CLEP test, DSST, or ECE), check out the Coast Guard Institute's new library of study materials (including, in most cases, on-line courses) for each of the 111 different tests. Everything's accessible via the Internet at [http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active\\_duty/go\\_to\\_college/earn\\_credits/dantes\\_library/default.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/earn_credits/dantes_library/default.asp).

## 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.