

## TraCen Cape May Education Update #378

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### Congratulations!!

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Work Site</b>	<b>Test</b>
FS3 Terance Felton	CGC Vigorous	FS2

In addition, YNC Jeremy Bruner just completed a Bachelor of Science in Management Studies from the University of Maryland (University College).

Well done, both of you!!!

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

### TraCen ESO on TAD

I'll be on TAD in Yorktown all next week (07 through 11 May) working to resolve a number of Coast Guard education issues. I may have access to e-mail after hours, but I may not be able to get back to you until Monday, 14 May.

## Question of the Week – Get help improving computer skills . . . for free

**Q:** I'd like to improve my computer skills, but don't have the time to take a course through my local community college. Are there any Coast Guard resources I could use to do this?

**A:** The short answer is, "Yes", through a company called SkillSoft which provides "on demand e-learning and performance support solutions." The Coast Guard has paid for SkillSoft licenses so you can access training at any time and any place to suit your needs.

Are you interested in learning to better use the programs that are part of Windows Office (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**. Once you've logged in, just click on "Catalog" to see all the free courses.

In addition, you can also use Books 24x7, an on-line library of hundreds of books covering topics related to business, IT, office and personnel management, and office computer applications.

To log in and check it out, go to the CGPortal, then click on the "Training & Education" button on the blue bar. On the left side of the "Training & Education" page click on the second button ("Skillport").

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 three pages: **ACT**, **SAT Reasoning Test**, and **Comparison: SAT Reasoning Test & the ACT** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sat.asp>, and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>).

## Grammar & Usage Corner

A number of people have asked that I expand my weekly "Frequently-Confused/Misused Words" entry to cover grammar and usage questions other than confused/misused words as well. This week, **accept** and **except**. (These definitions are from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

The word **accept** is a verb: "She accepted the invitation" and "We don't accept personal checks."

The word **except** is usually used as an adverb ("The exchange is open every day except Sunday"), but it can also be used as a conjunction ("I'd go with you except it's too far") or preposition ("Except for you, I'd be dead").

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).

## ACT & SAT at TraCen Cape May

I'll be administering the **ACT** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp>) at TraCen Cape May on **Thursday, 07 June starting at 0730**. And I'll be administering the **SAT Reasoning Test** (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/sat.asp>) on **Thursday, 24 May starting at 0730**.

Seats will be reserved for you on a first come, first served basis so let me know ASAP if you want to take one of these tests.

DANTES Test Control Officers (ESOs who've been specifically designated) may administer these tests only for uniformed personnel. In general, military personnel are authorized to take one ACT **or** one SAT paid for by DANTES. So if you want to take both, one would be free and you'd likely have to pay for the other. The ACT costs \$34; the SAT costs \$49.

ESOs may administer the ACT at any time of the year, and can administer the SAT during all months except July, August, and September. You can see a comparison of the SAT and ACT at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/comparison.asp>.

Be aware that in almost all cases military personnel don't need to take either the ACT or SAT to take college courses.

You can read/download *Preparing for the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/PreparingACT.pdf>) and *Taking the ACT* (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/TakingACT.pdf>) for more information about the test. As for actual preparation materials, check out <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html> and <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/act.asp#prep>.

Do not register on-line for the SAT if you want to take it through your DANTES TCO.

## 8 Ways to Boost Your ACT and SAT Scores

This article, on the blog "The College Solution" (<http://www.thecollegesolution.com/8-ways-to-boost-your-act-and-sat-scores>), actually provides five tips to help you prepare to take an ACT or SAT and three about what to do with the scores you receive. The on-line preparation resources alone make the article worth reading, but there's sound advice throughout the short article.

## Transferring GI Bill Benefits to Dependents

(courtesy of Mr. Reidus Stokes, at PSC)

If you plan to transfer any new (Post-9/11) GI Bill benefits to any dependents, you need to do so while you're still a member of the armed forces. Again, it **must** be done while you're still in the Coast Guard; once you've left the Coast Guard (voluntarily or involuntarily) you will be prohibited from making an initial transfer of benefits to any dependents. (If you've already transferred some of these benefits to your dependents before you leave the Coast Guard, you'll be able to change how they're allocated after you leave.)

Also, be aware that the longer you wait in your career to transfer these benefits, the more likely it is that your retirement will be delayed. That is, you may incur a service obligation beyond your anticipated retirement date if you wait too long to transfer benefits to a dependent. The amount of time you may have to serve after transferring your benefit depends on when you became eligible for retirement.

For a run-down on service obligation amounts, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/gibill-33b.asp#obligation>.

## Spouse Education Grant Deadline Approaching

From **01 April until 01 June 2012**, the Coast Guard Foundation will accept applications for a needs-based education grant for spouses of Coast Guard enlisted personnel in pay grades E-3 through E-6. The grant (\$500) is intended to help the spouses of personnel on active duty in the regular Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Applicants need only show enrollment in an education program or proof of a course completion (i.e., they can apply for the grant even before a course begins). Types of courses for which reimbursement is available include those offered by

vocational and certification programs, as well as those offered at colleges and universities. Download the application form: [http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG\\_Form\\_1570.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1570.pdf).

Applicants will not need to provide receipts for expenses, but they will need to itemize expenses. They will also need to list some basic financial information. Transportation and child care expenses can be listed as legitimate expenses for the grant. Also part of the application process is an essay (no longer than 500 words) which addresses what it means to the applicant to be a Coast Guard spouse and describing the difference education has made to the applicant's life and the lives of the applicant's family members.

In June, a selection committee will convene to select grantees. The Coast Guard Institute expects as many as 40 spouses will receive assistance. This grant will be a somewhat different from the other grants administered by the Coast Guard Institute in that the Institute will handle the paperwork and selection processes while the Coast Guard Foundation will actually write the checks.

## Scholarships

Below are descriptions of a number of scholarships open to military personnel, their dependents, or both. **Be aware, however, that these are just a few of thousands of scholarships you or your dependents may be eligible for.** They're the low-hanging fruit, the ones most often publicized and (as a result) the ones that have the most applicants. If you really want some serious money from scholarships, you'll apply to all you're eligible for – especially those not widely known. For more about scholarships (including how to find and apply for them in a systematic manner), go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/scholarships.asp>.

### Coast Guard Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Association

Applications are now being accepted for the Art and Eleanor Colona Scholarship Grant, sponsored by the Coast Guard Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Associations (CWOA). Children of regular Coast Guard personnel, Reservists on active duty, and retirees may apply for the \$4,000 scholarship (to be paid in four installments of \$1,000 per year). The application deadline is **01 June 2012**. For more information, go to see ALCOAST 136/12 at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/doc/ALCOAST136-12.pdf>.

### Waldorf College

(courtesy of Mr. Marc Fagenbaum, full-time ESO at Base Miami)

To recognize the sacrifices made by the family members of military servicemembers and public safety personnel (firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs & dispatchers) Waldorf College in Iowa will award eight scholarships for on-line students and two for residential students in 2012 through the Hero Behind the Hero Scholarship Program.

Two scholarships (one for the military spouse or dependent and one for the firefighters/law enforcement officer spouse or dependent) will be presented on the award dates listed. Applicants not selected may continue to apply for a maximum of five scholarship award dates.

#### Scholarship Application Periods

01 APR 2012 – 03 MAY 2012  
 01 JUN 2012 – 31 JUL 2012  
 01 AUG 2012 – 30 SEP 2012  
 01 OCT 2012 – 30 NOV 2012

#### Scholarship Award Dates

June 2012 (on-line)  
 August 2012 (on-line)  
 October 2012 (on-line)  
 December 2012 (on-line)

Go to <http://www.waldorf.edu/Online/Tuition---Financing/Scholarships/Hero-Behind-the-Hero> for more information and a link to an on-line application. Or you can e-mail [hero@waldorf.edu](mailto:hero@waldorf.edu) or call 877-267-2157.

## Coast Guard Institute Transcripts

The American Council on Education (ACE) evaluates “A” and “C” school curricula to determine how many credits you would have earned in college if you had covered there the same material you covered in an “A” or “C” school.

You can get a transcript of these credits from the Coast Guard Institute by downloading and submitting a form ([http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG\\_Form\\_1561.pdf](http://uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cgi/forms/CG_Form_1561.pdf)) through your ESO. When filling out the form, you have a number of options as to what you want the Institute to do.

- If this is the first time you’ve submitted a transcript request, check the “Assessment” box.
- If you’ve submitted an assessment request before, and want to update it, check the “Update to Assessment” box.

From either of these, you’ll receive an unofficial transcript by e-mail from the Institute.

- If you want an official transcript (which can be sent to a college, university, or your ESO), check the “Official Transcript” box.

Unofficial transcripts differ from official transcripts in that they’re not printed on paper (you’ll receive a PDF file). Official transcripts are printed on special, watermarked paper that makes tampering obvious and they have the Coast Guard Institute’s seal on them. To see if credits earned through military service will count toward a degree, you have to have an official transcript sent to the school you want to get the degree from.

If you’re just curious about how many credits you’ve accumulated in which subjects and don’t feel you need an assessment, you can go to ACE’s web site (<http://www.militaryguides.acenet.edu/>).

Bear in mind that every college and university in the U.S. has its own criteria for deciding whether to accept credits earned anywhere else. So credits that show up on your Coast Guard transcript may or may not be accepted toward majors and degrees at your preferred school.

## Alternatives to Semester-Based College

Have you thought about taking CLEP tests as a way to earn college credit, but then rejected the idea because studying on your own doesn’t work for you? Or have you thought about taking college courses, but rejected that idea because they take too much time or because you’re concerned ops may get in the way of completing a course? If so, check out self-paced college courses (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>).

They have the benefit of being quicker to complete than semester- or quarter-based college courses (most schools allow you to complete them in as few as six weeks) while they’re structured so you learn the material in digestible chunks rather than being left completely on your own.

These courses have the added benefit of not being tied to a traditional term: you can start at any time. They also give you a huge amount of flexibility: you can take almost as long as you want to complete the course (up to 12 months in most cases) and there are no set dates for lessons or tests. And some schools offer whole degree programs this way.

Check out some of the many reputable schools which offer self-paced (or independent study) courses at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/schools.asp#self-paced>.

## Having Difficulty with Math?

Are you brushing up on math basics before re-starting a delayed degree? Mystified by physics? Stymied by certain concepts in your college math course? If so, the on-line Khan Academy may be just what you’re looking for to help get over academic hurdles. A recent article in *Wired* magazine ([http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/07/ff\\_khan?rXFb&mbid=su\\_ppc\\_mag\\_3&rQZb](http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/07/ff_khan?rXFb&mbid=su_ppc_mag_3&rQZb)) will tell you all about it.

Or go to the Khan Academy web site (<http://www.khanacademy.org/>). It's a fantastic tool for learning a whole subject or just mastering a particular concept.

## Summer & Fall ACCC Course Guides Available

Atlantic Cape Community College's summer and fall course guides are available in the atrium of the exchange, outside the Education Center (Admin/Mission Support Building, Room 113), and in the waiting area across from the lab in the clinic.

**NOTE:** the tuition for both the summer and fall terms at ACCC has increased. Make sure to check the course guide for the correct amount before filling out your TA request. The tuition for the summer and fall terms is not the same.

## DSSTs May Be Your Ticket to College Credit

In addition to CLEP (the College Level Examination Program) tests, which most people have heard about, there are also DSSTs. Like CLEP tests, DSSTs are essentially final exams for college courses. They earn you 3 credits, which means that unlike the five most popular CLEP tests (which earn you 6 credits each), there's less material covered in each of DSST.

And, unlike CLEP tests, you can take DSSTs through many ESOs since they're still available in a paper-and-pencil format.

For a complete list of DSSTs that are available, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp>. A number of these cover subjects you've mastered during your Coast Guard service, either on-the-job or in training you've received. These are tests you may be able to pass with very little preparation, depending on your rate. These include:

- Introduction to Computing
- Principles of Finance
- Principles of Financial Accounting
- Management Information Systems
- Organizational Behavior
- Personal Finance
- Human Resource Management
- Principles of Supervision
- Ethics in America
- Fundamentals of Counseling
- Drug & Alcohol Abuse
- Here's to Your Health
- Principles of Public Speaking
- Technical Writing
- Criminal Justice
- Introduction to Law Enforcement

Keep in mind, though, that these are tests – not courses. The links to each exam you'll find at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/dsst.asp> take you to that exam's very short fact sheet which outlines the topics covered on the test, provides suggested references to study to prepare for the test, and a number of sample questions. But, on the whole, you have to find study materials that will work for you and study without a curriculum or instructor.

## CLEP Test & DSST Prep Resource

(courtesy of full-time ESO Joe Bloomquist, St. Louis)

If you're looking for a way to prepare for a DSST or CLEP test, check out <http://www.passyourclass.com/index.html>. Although the company seems not to know that DANTES has had nothing to do with DSSTs for about 20 years, its study guides may be just what you need to pass one of these tests and save the time and expense of taking specific college courses. And, the company has a money-back guarantee: if you use one of its study guides and don't pass the corresponding test, you'll get a 100% refund.

You can also find links to many other prep resources at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp>.

## Top-Tier University Courses On-Line and Free

(courtesy of CWO3 John Caicedo & full-time ESO at Base Seattle, Troy Blappert)

CWO John Caicedo (F&S3) at the Coast Guard Navigation Center brought a web site to my attention. It's called Coursera (<http://www.coursera.org>) and I'll quote directly from it to let you know what it's all about.

We offer high quality courses from the top universities, for free to everyone. We currently host courses from Princeton University, Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and University of Pennsylvania. We are changing the face of education globally, and we invite you to join us.

Classes offered on Coursera are designed to help you master the material. When you take one of our classes, you will watch lectures taught by world-class professors, learn at your own pace, test your knowledge, and reinforce concepts through interactive exercises. When you join one of our classes, you'll also join a global community of thousands of students learning alongside you. We know that your life is busy, and that you have many commitments on your time. Thus, our courses are designed based on sound pedagogical foundations, to help you master new concepts quickly and effectively. Key ideas include mastery learning, to make sure that you have multiple attempts to demonstrate your new knowledge; using interactivity, to ensure student engagement and to assist long-term retention; and providing frequent feedback, so that you can monitor your own progress, and know when you've really mastered the material.

We offer courses in a wide range of topics, spanning the Humanities, Medicine, Biology, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Business, Computer Science, and many others. Whether you're looking to improve your resume, advance your career, or just learn more and expand your knowledge, we hope there will be multiple courses that you find interesting.

And, in addition to seconding Coursera, Troy Blappert (at Base Seattle) suggested two other sites. To paraphrase him, if you're interested in learning something new but don't necessarily want to take a for-credit course, check these out:

- Udemy (<http://www.udemy.com/>) has many free and a few low cost university and other courses. Whether you want to master an academic subject or want to start your own business or learn about graphic design, this site can help you.
- MITx (<http://mitx.mit.edu/>) offers free courses from the MIT faculty.

And you can find many other sources of free or nearly free courses on thousands of subjects via the links on my web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/studymaterials.asp>.

## On-line Professional Development Courses

Excelsior College's Center for Professional Development recently sent out its 2012 Online Program Catalog. It describes more than a hundred non-credit courses in business, education, health care, investigative science, skilled trades,

sustainable and green energy, technology & design. For more information about these courses, go to <http://www.excelsior.edu/cpd> and <http://www.excelsior.edu/cpddemo>.

And Thomas Edison State College also offers “professional certificates and other noncredit programs that prepare students for a wide variety of professions in the fastest growing industries and meet the needs of large and small organizations through customized training.” Most recently added to its professional certificates are Electronic Health Records and Counterterrorism Intelligence. And its newest non-credit courses are “Leadership through Governance – The Role of Nonprofit Boards” and “General Building Code”. For a list of them all, go to <http://www.tesc.edu/watson/Find-Noncredit-Program.cfm>.

Because you will not earn college credit for these courses, tuition assistance won't pay for them. But the courses are approved for GI Bill education benefits. And, if a course is related to your job, your unit may decide it's worth using training funds to pay for it.

## Looking for a Post-CG Career with a Future?

If you're looking for a recession-proof career, you might consider companies that generate and distribute energy. Nearly 40% of current workers in utility companies are expected to retire or leave within the next five years. Openings include security officer positions, which you might be hired for without specialized training (depending on your current rate), engineers, line workers, plant operators, pipe fitters, welders, and others.

The Center for Energy Workforce Development is a non-profit consortium of electrical, natural gas, and nuclear utilities and their associations formed to help utilities develop solutions to the coming workforce shortage in the utility industry. Check out its Troops to Energy Jobs initiative at the bottom of this page (<http://www.cewd.org/index.asp>) and <http://engineers.getintoenergy.com/index.php>.

And once you've read a bit about the types of work that's likely to become available, check out the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>) to find out more about

- the nature of the work,
- required training,
- other qualifications,
- advancement opportunities,
- current and future employment prospects,
- earnings,
- related occupations,
- sources of additional information.

Bismarck State College in North Dakota (<http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/programs/>) can get you ready for these careers via its on-line degree, certification, and non-degree programs in the following energy-related fields:

- Electric power
- Electric transmission systems
- Energy management
- Instrumentation & control
- Mechanical maintenance technology
- Nuclear power technology
- Petroleum production
- Power plant technology
- Processing plant technology
- Renewable generation
- Water & waste water.

If you follow the news, you know that these industries are crying for people with training in these areas.

The maximum per-credit tuition is currently \$227 (depending on which program you're pursuing) with fees totaling approximately \$22/credit. For more information, go to <http://energy.bismarckstate.edu/programs/>.

## Expand Your Vocabulary & Mind

If you're preparing for a college or professional school entrance exam (ACT, SAT, GRE, GMAT, LSAT) or to re-take the WK part of the AFCT (ASVAB), or if you just want to improve your vocabulary, check out Knoword (<http://www.knoword.org/home.php>).

The site describes it as "a game of quick thinking, smart decisions and great words. It focuses on teaching and advocating proper spelling habits, as well as good observational, analytical and typing skills. What makes Knoword different from all the other fun word games out there is that it's actually fun! With its fast-paced, addictive gameplay and a competitive and comprehensive player ranking system, Knoword pushes the limits on contemporary puzzle games and provides its players with a truly rewarding experience."

## College Success Tips for Adult Learners

If you're taking college courses or thinking about doing so, please stop by the Education Center (Mission Support/Admin Building, Room 113) to get a copy of *College Success Tips for Adult Learners*. Here are a few chapter titles:

- Top 10 Reasons to Continue Your Education
- Selecting the Right Distance Learning Program
- Credit by Examination
- Choosing Classes
- Study Tactics
- How to Manage Time Well
- Writing a Research Paper

Even if you've been taking college courses for awhile, I think you'll find something useful in it.

## Thinking About Taking College Courses?

If you're interested in taking college courses, but are unsure where to start or what to do first, go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/Education/starting.asp>. The seven steps provided there will help you

- understand terminology and how you progress toward a degree,
- figure out whether you need a degree to enter the field you want to work in,
- if a degree will be helpful, determine what you want to major in,
- find colleges/universities which offer degrees in your desired major,
- request degree plans from your chosen school(s),
- submit a request to the Coast Guard Institute for an education assessment and to have official transcripts of your assessment sent to colleges you've identified, and
- pick your first course.

This is the hardest part of the process. Once you've done this, it's just a matter of deciding which type of funding to use (tuition assistance, GI Bill, scholarships, loans, or a combination of these) and applying for it. Tuition assistance (TA) and GI Bill funding is easy to use and readily available. You've got to plan ahead if you want to get scholarships because applications are usually due at specific times of the year that might not coincide with dates your courses begin. And loans, while they're readily available, should be your last recourse.

## 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>.

## TraCen Cape May Testing Calendar

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

Tuesdays (0730): EOCTs, RATs, and AQEs\*

Wednesdays (0800): Defense Language Proficiency Tests

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

\* If operations or your work schedule make it impossible for you to take an EOCT, RAT, 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 Mondays and 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 Wednesdays, 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).

## 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.