



**U.S. Department of Transportation**

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Kings Point Community:

24 November 2021

Today, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Maritime Administration (MARAD) are releasing a new report on the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) written by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). This report was mandated by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020.

Entitled “Organizational Assessment of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA): A Path Forward,” the report is a frank assessment of many of the challenges confronting the Academy in numerous areas, including academic programming; diversity, equity, and inclusion; sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH); governance and oversight; and infrastructure maintenance and capital planning. The report makes clear that these challenges are long-standing and systemic and are compounded by years of under-resourcing at the Academy.

While the issues enumerated by the report may be familiar to many of you, we recognize that the report is hard-hitting and these challenges are daunting. The report is accompanied by a White Paper—also written by NAPA—that provides initial suggestions regarding how implementation of the more than five dozen recommendations made in the report could be sequenced. At a minimum, the White Paper makes it clear that addressing these issues will require many years of work and an extensive investment of resources.

We want to reassure you that we will continue the deliberate effort in which we have been engaged from the first days of the Biden-Harris Administration to address the challenges facing the Academy.

Our USMMA midshipmen are extraordinary leaders. They are remarkably thoughtful about both the challenges and the opportunities at USMMA, and they are committed to advancing positive change at the Academy. They have chosen to pursue careers serving our Nation, and they deserve a modern, safe, and inclusive learning environment where they have the training and resources that will prepare them to realize their limitless potential.

USDOT and MARAD have numerous efforts underway to address challenges identified in the NAPA report. For example, USDOT and MARAD have announced a temporary pause in Sea Year training. We are developing new requirements for commercial vessels that carry cadets to protect the safety, security, and well-being of students—and of all mariners—by supporting a respectful climate where SASH is not tolerated. We remain on track to submit a plan to Congress in December detailing these requirements as well as the policy and procedure changes that will be implemented at USMMA to improve safety and ensure students are better supported on campus and during the Sea Year.

In alignment with the report’s recommendation that USMMA engage a facility executive to direct and coordinate maintenance and capital efforts, USDOT has detailed a senior federal

official to direct ongoing efforts to address the Academy's maintenance backlog and lead capital efforts. Efforts are also underway to make this position and others recommended in the report permanent.

Also consistent with the NAPA recommendation that USMMA accelerate investments in information technology, the USDOT Office of Chief Information Officer is identifying options to upgrade information technology systems.

We will continue to advance these efforts as quickly as possible and appreciate your recommendations to help us address the challenges identified in the NAPA report.

We have also deeply appreciated the open and frank discussions we have had with so many of you—midshipmen, faculty, parents, and alumni—and are inspired by your impassioned commitment to the Academy. We look forward to continuing to work with you all to make USMMA even stronger!

Sincerely,



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Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department  
of Transportation



Lucinda Lessley  
Acting Administrator  
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VADM Jack Buono, U.S.M.S.  
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