

United States Merchant Marine Academy



Middle States Commission on Higher Education Self-Study Design

3 November 2023

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Section 1: Institutional Overview

The United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) is one of the five federal service academies, along with the United States Air Force Academy, the United States Naval Academy, the United States Military Academy, and the United States Coast Guard Academy. New admits require a Congressional nomination and must meet rigorous academic and physical standards to become a member of an incoming class. Candidates must also meet the suitability requirements for commission in the US Navy Reserve. During their tenure at the Academy, midshipmen are expected to maintain high standards of moral character while completing their academic programs of study, fulfilling sea year requirements, and attaining their US Coast Guard licensing credentials.

In response to the Merchant Marine Act passed by Congress in 1936, USMMA was established in 1943 and dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, making its permanent home in Kings Point, NY. USMMA was accredited and granted Congressional authorization to confer Bachelor of Science degrees in 1949. Every significant period during both peace and war from World War II on has relied upon USMMA trained and graduated officers to support military efforts. In 1956, USMMA was deemed by Congress to be a “permanent institution,” and in 1974 was the first service academy to admit and enroll female students. In 2023, USMMA celebrates its 80th anniversary as we embrace the traditions of our past and transition to the future.

Our midshipmen and graduates exemplify the concept of “service above self,” and adhere to the motto “Acta Non Verba” (Deeds Not Words). Our Four Pillars consist of Academics, the Regiment, Physical Fitness, and Sea Year. Our Core Values are *Respect, Honor, and Service*. Daily planning and related activities are conducted with the Four Pillars and Core Values in mind. Our leadership structure (**Figure 1: USMMA Proposed Organizational Chart**) is comprised of the United States Department of Transportation (DOT); the Maritime Administration (MARAD), an agency of the DOT; the USMMA Board of Visitors; the Maritime Education and Training Executive Review Board (METERB); and the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Academic Dean and Provost, Commandant of Midshipmen, and Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen.

Worthy of mention is the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee (IESC), comprised of a group of Academy leaders who gather feedback from committees under the Academic Dean/Provost’s purview that informs the Superintendent’s Cabinet (**Figure 2: IESC and Committee Flow Chart**). Recent shifts in many of these governing entities and administrative roles have contributed to an organic evaluation of policy, procedure, and priorities, always with the Academy mission and the success of our midshipmen of paramount importance.

Certainly, since the Covid-19 global pandemic and its residual effects, the implementation and/or continuation of major infrastructure projects and forward movement of departmental and curricular advances on campus have been compounded by several internal and external factors. Some improvements have come to fruition more rapidly; others have slowed due to factors such as funding, challenging timelines, and stakeholder influence.

For clarity and situational awareness as we move through the Self-Study process, there are several considerations that will color and shape the narrative. They include, but are not limited to: the aforementioned shifts in leadership roles and the governance structure; the status of major infrastructure projects; the shift to a 3-split system for Sea Year and related curricular changes; the results of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Study; the formation of a board incentivized by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) in response to the NAPA Study results (**Figure 3: MSCHE Requirements with NAPA Recommendations Excerpt**); and the creation of Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture (EMBARC) program in response to the Sea Year stand-down.

The Academy continues to make great strides in developing and diversifying Academy personnel with the addition of a Chief of Staff, a newly appointed Public Affairs Officer, and the recent hiring of a new Director of Human Resources. The Sexual Assault, Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) has also expanded, and there is a plan in place for additional hires such as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer and more faculty hires across all disciplines, specifically Mathematics, Science, Marine Engineering and Marine Transportation.

USMMA is a unique institution as it prepares midshipmen to become licensed mariners while equipping them with industry-specific skill sets and a strong STEM education through the achievement of baccalaureate and master's degrees. Our top programs by enrollment are: Marine Transportation/Maritime Logistics and Security; Marine Engineering; Marine Engineering Systems; Marine Engineering and Shipyard Management; and Marine Transportation. The graduate program leads to a Master of Science in Marine Engineering.

The United States Merchant Marine Academy is ranked #3 of the Best Colleges in Regional Colleges North, according to the *US News & World Report 2022-23*. *The Princeton Review* deems USMMA one of the "Best Value Colleges for 2023." Each year, we have approximately 1,000 midshipmen combined, in residence and at sea. Our midshipmen are taught by more than 135 faculty members on our 82-acre campus in Kings Point, NY and students enjoy small classes that average 24 or fewer students per class.

With 18 NCAA Division III varsity programs, three popular competitive club sports (Rugby, Ice Hockey, and Water Polo), several waterfront activities, and over 40 registered clubs and organizations chartered through the Office of Student Activities, our midshipmen are always busy striving for excellence in the classrooms, in the Regiment, on the fields and courts, and on the water.

The administration, staff, faculty, and coaches at USMMA continuously endeavor to provide the same excellence for our midshipmen that we expect from them, regarding leadership, moral character, ethics, academic excellence, sportsmanship, mentorship, and comradery. We look forward to reflecting upon what we have done, examining what we are currently doing, and planning for meaningful improvement by way of this Self-Study process.

Section 2: Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in the Self-Study

In addition to Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) accreditation, the USMMA's Marine Engineering Systems (MES) and Marine Engineering Shipyard Management (MESM) programs are accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) of ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology). Elements of our academic programs provide all midshipmen with the specialized training and education necessary to become US Coast Guard licensed merchant marine officers, in compliance with the requirements set forth in the International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) 1978, as well as the STCW Code in all subsequent related amendments.

The MSCHE Steering Committee and Seven Working Groups intend to align all our accreditation bodies' standards and expectations with our new Strategic Plan and associated strategic/institutional priorities. The timing of our MSCHE Self-Study process is optimal, as we await approval by the Maritime Administration (MARAD) and subsequent implementation of the new 2024-2030 Strategic Plan. The Chair and members of the Strategic Planning Committee, along with multiple internal and external stakeholders, crafted the new plan with the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation in mind. It is the result of feedback and contributions from all constituents, inclusive of MARAD and its own Strategic Plan, as well as the ABET accreditation cycle and related self-study report.

The process for choosing the Institutional Priorities for the 2024-2030 Strategic Plan began with the Superintendent's USMMA Strategic Plan Guidance Memorandum dated June 10, 2022. In this memo, the Superintendent instructed the Strategic Plan Development Team to "build on our six Strategic Priorities but add additional focus areas and improved metrics to enhance progress."

The Strategic Plan Development Team, renamed the "Strategic Plan Steering Committee" from June 2022 until September 2023, enacted the guidance memo through the following steps: a review of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan and its accomplishments by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee as a whole and as sub-committees concurrently with feedback from parallel working groups drawn from alumni, industry, and the Parents' Association; briefings with faculty, staff, and administration; an open period for queries and comments (the Strategic Plan 2024-2030 was posted online as well as physically in an open viewing area in Wiley Hall); final draft review by the Superintendent's Cabinet where the Strategic Priorities were changed from six to four; and then subsequent review by the METERB with additional comments. What was significant about the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan review was that the metrics needed to be more acute and measurable. This was a major part of the data-driven decision (needing better data) that led to the retention, with revision, of the institutional priorities in the 2024-2030 Strategic Plan.

USMMA seeks to maintain a strong focus on its Strategic Plan priorities while assessing our progress via the Middle States Self-Study process. The USMMA 2024-2030 Strategic Plan "Empowering the Nation's Premier Maritime Service Academy through Revitalization and Innovation" is meant to be viewed as a system of interrelated activities that maximize USMMA's mission accomplishment. Based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory on Human

Development, the Strategic Plan uses reverse engineering to identify those characteristics necessary for the development of a successful Kings Point graduate.

This ecological system provides a visual explanation of how each strategic priority contributes to the creation of a graduate that reflects the values of the institution (**Figure 4: USMMA 2024-2030 Strategic Plan Infographic**). It also demonstrates how each priority helps meet the United States Merchant Marine Academy Mission: *to educate and graduate licensed merchant mariners and leaders of exemplary character who will serve America's marine transportation and defense needs in peace and war*. The Strategic Plan supports the idea that no one priority stands alone, nor does it interact only with one other area of the Academy. The priorities are intentionally unnumbered, to emphasize that they are all equally important, so they are instead categorized by key terms.

One of the four strategic/institutional priorities focuses on **institutional culture**, on *recruiting a diverse and qualified population of students, faculty, and staff that demonstrate and promote the institution's values, as well as cultivate an institutional culture in which every Academy community member is respected, valued, and can fulfill their maximum potential as a leader of exemplary character*. The leads for this charge are the Deputy Superintendent and Commandant, and the Campus Culture Strategic Priority Lead.

The goals of this priority include: instilling a sense of personal responsibility and building shared ownership across the Academy for contributing to the desired institutional culture where all members of the community are respected and valued; implementing and actively pursuing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) goals and plans; providing effective and progressive prevention training, a bystander intervention program, and a robust victim advocacy system to ensure the safety of midshipmen; building an Academy culture that supports victim-survivors and does not tolerate gender-based violence; establishing a baseline USMMA branding platform with core and consistent messaging across all marketing and communication efforts; annually elevating the standard of varsity program success; and creating a campus-wide environment in which the Regiment of Midshipmen is grounded in interpersonal relationships that demonstrate cultural competence, where diversity adds value to not only their educational experience, but also their global understanding.

Another of the four strategic/institutional priorities deals with **governance, leadership and administration**. USMMA seeks to *enhance shared governance, trusted leadership, and an invested administration to promote prolonged success as an institution of higher education*. The lead for this charge is the Superintendent, supported by the Governance Strategic Priority Lead.

The goals of this priority include: determining if USMMA's governance structure is in line with those of peer institutions and benchmarking best governance practices; proposing adjustments to relevant entities, if deemed advisable; creating an easily comprehensible and explainable image of the governance structure; ensuring all governance bodies are working to the full extent of their charter and to not continue to add committees/advisory boards/other non-essential groups until the current governance bodies are deemed ineffectual or outdated; exploring pathways for stronger faculty governance, including earlier-stage involvement in Human Resources and

formal involvement in major purchases affecting day-to-day workflow, generally aiming to trust faculty with shared governance when appropriate/applicable; and conducting a full review of communication capacity, and from this review establish a comprehensive communications plan for both internal and external stakeholders. The plan should, at its baseline, develop a clear and consistent message that effectively communicates the organization's vision, mission, values, and objectives. Its purpose should also build trust and credibility with stakeholders through transparent, honest, and timely communication. The plan should focus on being less reactionary to events and include a component of crisis communication planning. It should establish standard operating procedures, especially for media inquiries. Additionally, it should make sure two-way communication channels exist that allow stakeholders to provide feedback, ask questions, and share concerns.

An additional strategic/institutional priority examines **academy infrastructure**, with a *desire to develop a 21st century Academy infrastructure that supports student learning and engages faculty, staff, coaches, and students not only to sustain the Academy but to inspire innovation at USMMA while promoting the safety, health, and wellness of all*. The lead for this charge is the Director of Facilities and Infrastructure Management supported by the Infrastructure Strategic Priority Lead.

The goals of this priority include: executing steady monitoring of security and safety, timely reporting and repair of USMMA campus buildings, grounds, utilities, vessels, and equipment; ensuring all existing physical infrastructure be maintained in a safe and good state of repair, and in full compliance with applicable standards and regulations; the timely advancement of all Capital Improvement projects, i.e. planning and implementation; proper prioritization and use of funding to complete those projects that have a direct effect on campus buildings, grounds, utilities, vessels, and equipment as quickly as possible, and in full compliance with applicable standards and regulations; creating an Academy-wide Technology Support Plan; developing a comprehensive, unified plan to ensure the availability and maintenance of a modern technology infrastructure to support the Academy's academic mission and goals.

A final strategic/institutional priority highlights our **educational program**, for which we regularly discuss new ways *to invigorate our educational program while promoting student SUCCESS, experiential learning in the regiment, and professional expertise both ashore and afloat*. The leads for this charge are the Provost and Commandant, supported by the Education Strategic Priority Lead.

The goals of this priority include: fulfilling the mission of the Academy; establishing the foundation for life-long professional growth for graduates, providing education and training across the Academy's Four Pillars; creating global leaders who are experts in the maritime field; creating a culture of continuous integrated assessment and assessment-driven improvement in educational effectiveness and midshipman development to demonstrate achievement of institutional learning goals across the educational programs; innovative programs that are continuously improving and aligned with emerging industry trends and technology to ensure 100% placement of academy graduates in the maritime industry and Armed Forces; and devising and implementing a road map for the development of our midshipmen into leaders of exemplary character as they experience various levels of challenging leadership opportunities.

All four USMMA strategic/institutional priorities will be examined through the respective lenses of each of the Seven MSCHE Standards (13th Edition). These priorities were developed with elements of the USMMA Mission, Vision, Four Pillars, and Core Values in mind, while also taking into consideration the expectations of all our governing and accreditation bodies. While we understand that all boxes may not be checked for each Standard, careful examination to do so will ensure the most comprehensive understanding of the importance of each as they relate to the others.

Table 1: Alignment of Mission with Institutional Priorities and **Table 2: Alignment of Institutional Priorities with MSCHE Standards** illustrate the combined efforts of and feedback from the Steering Committee, Seven Working Groups, faculty, staff, midshipmen and other consulted stakeholders. It will be the continued work of these groups to further investigate interrelationships as they pertain to the Self-Study narrative.

Table 1: Alignment of USMMA Mission with Institutional Priorities










Mission Statement Elements	Priority: Institutional Culture	Priority: Governance, Leadership & Administration	Priority: Academy Infrastructure	Priority: Educational Program
Provide midshipmen with an exceptional, comprehensive educational experience				
Provide leadership opportunities for midshipmen across the Four Pillars				
Develop midshipmen who possess the characteristics of exemplary civil servants				
Equip graduates with skill sets and credentials that meet industry standards				

Table 2: Alignment of Institutional Priorities with MSCHE Standards

MSCHE Standards	Priority: Institutional Culture	Priority: Governance, Leadership & Administration	Priority: Academy Infrastructure	Priority: Educational Program
I. Mission and Goals				
II. Ethics and Integrity				
III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience				
IV. Support of the Student Experience				
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment				
VI. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement				
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration				

The MSCHE reaccreditation cycle is at the forefront of our institutional awareness and is part and parcel of all new and revised governing documents, to include Superintendent's Instructions (SIs), Superintendent's Notices (SNs), Dean's Memoranda (DMs), Commandant's Instructions (CIs) and Commandant's Notices (CNs). These documents will be referred to throughout the Self-Study Report and will be housed in the Evidence Inventory.

Section 3: Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

The Steering Committee and Seven Working Groups agreed that since the Self-Study process provides the framework for deep reflection on where the Academy has been, where we stand currently, and where we wish to go as we look toward our future, consideration of the desired outcomes should be equally thoughtful. Outcomes #1-3 are guided by MSCHE expectations; Outcome #4 was crafted by the Steering Committee and the Seven Working Groups after several weeks of brainstorming and conversation:

#1: Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation;

#2: Focus on continuous improvement in the attainment of the institution's mission and in meeting its institutional priorities;

#3: Engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process that actively and deliberately seeks to involve members from all areas of the institutional community; and

#4: Examine how we create, foster and support a positive campus culture and meaningful midshipman experience from recruitment through graduation and beyond.

The Seven Working Groups have identified, by considering how we reinforce the Four Pillars in a manner that makes a positive impact on the midshipman experience, what makes the members of the community proud to work, learn, and graduate from USMMA. We are committed to evolving with the ever-changing times to assure we continue to positively serve our community and graduate strong leaders who have received not only a great education, but also exceptional learning experiences that make them prideful of the institution they attended.

We spend much of our time on the important work that centers on what our students learn; we charge ourselves with what we can learn and utilize from the close examination of all facets of the Academy through the Self-Study process; meaning, take what we discover and apply it to courses, programs, policies, processes, and any other pertinent areas where change and innovation will benefit our midshipmen and our collective community. The integration of Strategic/Institutional Priorities from the Strategic Plan and its related goals, measures, and indicators will also support the universality of assessment practices and the streamlining of future planning, as we will be carefully considering how all parts drive the Academy mission.

Through the process of self-study, USMMA will review, affirm, and materialize the links between our mission and core values to the current Strategic Plan and reaccreditation processes.

We will engage the community in a meaningful and transparent self-evaluation process while utilizing the Self-Study process to inform decision making and guide future planning efforts.

Section 4: Self-Study Approach

The USMMA Self-Study approach will be Standards-Based. As we navigate multiple accrediting processes and layers of governance, it will be helpful to use the Seven Standards as focal points for alignment and inquiry that inform the perceptual framework for each chapter of the narrative. A Standards-Based approach will guide the Academy community (midshipmen, staff, faculty, leadership, and select external constituents) to become familiar with its mission, core values and strategic planning process. The process will subsequently allow each Working Group to consider multiple ways in which the institution can improve for the future.

Each Working Group will investigate USMMA's educational processes to evaluate how they are meeting these Standards. Investigation will be conducted by having each Working Group map their assigned MSCHE Standard to a Strategic/Institutional Priority determined in the Strategic Plan. From this, the Working Groups will develop “Lines of Inquiry” that focus on how well USMMA meets the Seven Standards and Requirements of Affiliation. They will in turn determine reasons why the inquiry is important, potential types of data to be collected, current evidence of how well USMMA is meeting the goal, what the future considerations will be, and how meeting the goal provides a positive educational experience for our midshipmen.

The reciprocal relationships between MSCHE Standards, Strategic/Institutional Priorities, and ABET and Coast Guard requirements will in many ways mirror the ecological system of the new Strategic Plan, which highlights our desire to upgrade and strengthen the ship’s engine rather than attempt to rebuild it.

Section 5: Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups

The Dean’s Advisory Board is charged with briefing the Superintendent, Provost, and select committees on the progress of the MSCHE Steering Committee and Seven Working Groups. The Steering Committee is charged with informing the Dean’s Advisory Board of all timelines, tasks and forward movement of the Seven Working Groups, as well as reviewing all written documents, evidence, and communications. Each Working Group, chaired by a member of the Self-Study Steering Committee, is charged with aligning their respective Standard with the Institutional/Strategic Priorities included in the USMMA Strategic Plan 2024-2030 and the MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation, inclusive of supporting data collected and analyzed in alignment with the indicators and measures identified in our four Strategic/Institutional Priorities. Each Working Group has crafted its own respective charge(s).

The MSCHE Dean’s Advisory Board was created as an additional tier of guidance and communication for the Self-Study. It is comprised of members of the Academic Dean/Provost’s staff to inform him regarding Self-Study timelines, action items, Steering Committee needs, and Working Group activities. Members include:

- Dr. Lori Townsend: **Accreditation Liaison Officer** (Director of Institutional Assessment)
- Dr. Jennifer Albert: **Self-Study Steering Committee Chair** (ACE Deputy Director)
- Captain James Zatwarnicki: **Self-Study Steering Committee Co-Chair** (Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs)
- Dr. Susan Comilang: **Advisory Board Member** (Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs)
- Captain Preston DeJean: **Advisory Board Member** (Associate Professor, Marine Transportation)
- Captain Paul Acquaro: **Advisory Board Member/Chair of Strategic Planning Committee** (ACE Director)
- Dr. Alexander Retakh: **Institutional Data Assessment Specialist**, Professor of Mathematics

The MSCHE Self-Study Steering Committee is comprised of the Chairs of each of the Working Groups assigned to the Seven Standards. The Committee is responsible for funneling information from the Working Groups to the Dean's Advisory Board and providing directives to the Working Groups. Members include:

- Dr. Jennifer Albert: **Chair, Self-Study Steering Committee** (ACE Deputy Director)
- Captain James Zatwarnicki: **Co-Chair, Self-Study Steering Committee** (Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Assistant Professor, Department of Marine Transportation)
- Mr. Thomas O'Boyle: **Chair, Standard I – Mission & Goals** (Director of Student Activities)
- Captain Patrick Keane: **Chair, Standard II – Ethics & Integrity** (Director of Leadership & Ethics, Commandant's Department)
- Commander Carolyn Hunter: **Chair, Standard III – Design & Delivery of the Student Learning Experience** (Assistant Department Head, Marine Transportation and Sea Project Coordinator)
- Coach Michael Notebaert: **Chair, Standard IV – Support of the Student Experience** (Assistant Athletic Director for Facilities, Head Baseball Coach)
- Dr. Pamela Bryant: **Chair, Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment** (Chemistry and Physics Lab Manager, Department of Math & Science)
- Captain Peter Kahl: **Chair, Standard VI – Planning, Resources & Institutional Improvement** (Associate Professor, Department of Marine Engineering)
- Commander David Pulis: **Chair, Standard VII – Governance, Leadership & Administration** (Assistant Dean for Support Programs and Associate Professor, Department of Marine Engineering)

The Working Group members consist of staff, faculty and midshipmen representing a myriad of Academy constituents. Each group is also charged with gaining a strong understanding of their Standard and the intricacies of the USMMA Strategic Plan and its related Strategic/Institutional Priorities. The Working Groups receive guidance and direction from their respective Chairs, who are also Self-Study Steering Committee members, and work together to assign tasks internally and take a team approach to reporting data and narratives (quantitative and qualitative) to the Chair and Co-Chair. Each Working Group will review Academy documents to determine the extent to which they meet the MSCHE Standards of Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation assigned to the group and how they align with the Academy's Strategic/Institutional priorities. Each Working Group has an identified Chair and Co-Chair who is responsible for

coordinating the work of the group, submitting drafts of reports on time, and report to the Steering Committee.

Each Working Group divided their Standard's criteria and/or Requirements of Affiliation to ensure that each is being adequately analyzed. The person assigned to each component will be responsible for writing that particular section. The Working Group may also appoint one or more members to fulfill tasks of recorder, analyst(s), proof reader, and others as agreed upon.

The Self-Study will be Standards-Based and Working Groups will evaluate how well the Academy is meeting the MSCHE Standards of Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation as well as our own Strategic Plan priorities and Four Pillars. It will also seek solutions to identified challenges. It will be based on evidence and data collected by the Working Groups and measured where possible against the Academy's mission, goals, and vision.

Each Working Group will document which items they used from the inventory of existing support documents, as well as any new data elements that they collected, to address the questions raised. Each Working Group report should be analytical and interpretive rather than simply descriptive, and will result in conclusions that can be reformulated into recommendations.

Lines of Inquiry for each Working Group are indicated below after each group's charge. All Working Groups are also expected to comply with the following guidelines:

- The Working Groups will meet at least bi-weekly, beginning in November of 2023, to complete the requirements of its charge.
- Each Working Group will keep minutes of all meetings.
- The membership of each Working Group will read and develop familiarity with the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation, 13th Edition.
- Each Working Group will submit bi-weekly progress reports, a full first draft report to the Steering Committee Co-Chairs no later than March 31, 2024, and a full final draft report no later than May 15, 2024.
- Reports should make clear and specific reference to any relevant documents used by the Working Group in compiling the report.
- Reports will focus on how well the Academy is meeting the expectations defined by the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation assigned to the Working Group and how well our operations align with our Strategic Plan priorities.
- Reports will include analyses of the Academy's strengths and weaknesses as well as its challenges and opportunities regarding the MSCHE Standards, Requirements, and Strategic/Institutional Priorities of the USMMA Strategic Plan.
- Reports will also include recommendations that the Working Group would like to make on areas for improvement identified during this process.

Working Group for Standard I – Mission and Goals

Chair: Mr. Thomas O'Boyle, Director of Student Activities

Co-Chair: Commander Andrew McCarthy, Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen

Member: Dr. Amit Mokashi, Associate Professor of Maritime Business, Department of Marine Transportation

Member: Coach Lou Bernardi, Assistant Coach, Recruiting Coordinator, Athletics Department

Member: LT Kyle Morris, 2nd Company Officer

Midshipman Member: MIDN Caleb Hancock (2024)

Midshipman Member: MIDN Kaira Winston (2025)

Charge: Working Group I will be focused on examining **Standard I: Mission and Goals**, the description of which reads: “The institution’s mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.” In addition, this Working Group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 7**, “The institution has a mission statement and related goals, approved by its governing board that defines its purposes within the context of higher education,” and **Requirement of Affiliation 10**, “Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.”

Working Group I will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- How does the Academy articulate its mission and goals, and how are they communicated to internal and external stakeholders?
- How does the institution ensure that its mission and goals are aligned with those of its educational programs, services and activities?
- How does the institution involve faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders in the development and review of its mission and goals?
- How does the Academy ensure that its mission and goals promote, diversity, inclusivity, and respect for all members for the community?
- How does the institution ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and accreditation standards related to its mission and goals?

Working Group for Standard II – Ethics & Integrity

Chair: Captain Patrick Keane, Director of Leadership and Ethics Development

Co-Chair: Lieutenant Tamara Kaileh, Academy Training Representative, Office of Professional Development and Career Services

Member: Commander James Schutta, Regimental Officer, Department of the Commandant

Member: Captain Daniel Straub, Director of Naval Science

Member: Coach Alexa Shields, Assistant Professor, Women’s Basketball Head Coach

Member: Ms. Julie Hodge, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

Member: Ms. Sophia Soler, Equal Opportunity Employment Manager

Member: Ms. Vivian Baierwalter, Human Resources Specialist

Member: Mr. Joe Becker, Admissions Recruitment Specialist

Midshipman Member: MIDN Grant Gould (2024), Regimental Honor Board Chair

Charge: Working Group II will be focused on analyzing **Standard II: Ethics and Integrity**, the description of which reads: “Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.” In addition, this Working Group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 13**, “The governing body adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution ,” and **Requirement of Affiliation 14**, “The institution and its governing body/bodies make freely available to the Commission accurate, fair and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations.”

Working Group II will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- How does the Academy promote a culture of ethics and integrity among its faculty, staff and midshipman?
- How does the Academy communicate its expectations regarding ethical behavior to its faculty, staff and midshipman?
- What processes are in place to address and resolve ethical concerns or violations within the Academy?
- What mechanisms are in place to assess and address the effectiveness of the Academy’s efforts to promote ethics and integrity?

Working Group for Standard III – Design & Delivery of the Student Experience

Chair: Commander Carolyn Hunter, Assistant Department Head, Marine Transportation and Sea Project Coordinator

Co-Chair: Captain Sean Tortora, USMMA Faculty Forum President, Associate Professor, Department of Marine Transportation

Member: Dr. Daniel Fong, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics & Science

Member: Professor Mark Bulaclac, Assistant Professor, Department of Marine Engineering

Member: Prof. James Rogin, Assistant Professor, Department of Marine Transportation

Midshipman Member: MIDN Amaranda Teany (2024)

Midshipman Member: MIDN Karan Driehuys (2024)

Charge: Working Group III will be analyzing **Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience**, the description of which reads: “An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence in all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program, pace/schedule, level, and setting, are consistent with higher education expectations.” In addition, this Working Group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 8**, “The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes”; **Requirement of Affiliation 9**, “The institution’s student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievements throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality”; **Requirement of Affiliation 10**, “Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments”; and **Requirement of Affiliation 15**, “The Institution has a core faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution’s educational programs.”

Working Group III will be focusing on Middle States Standard III and USMMA’s Strategic/Institutional Priorities of the Education Program, Campus Culture, and Infrastructure. A full review of USMMA’s academic program will be conducted to demonstrate how we meet the MSCHE Standards and Requirements of Affiliation.

The analytical focus for Working Group III will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- How does United States Merchant Marine Academy ensure that its educational programs are aligned with its mission, goals and intended student learning outcomes meet the criteria for Standard III?
- How does the United States Merchant Marine Academy ensure that its educational programs are designed to meet the needs and expectations of its students and stakeholders to meet the Requirements of Affiliation numbers eight, nine, ten, and fifteen as they relate to Standard III?
- How are academic, license programs, military obligation and Academy requirements publicly disseminated and are they clearly laid out and understandable for perspective students, current students and faculty?
- Does USMMA provide qualified faculty, student support services, commercial shipping billets and ensure the adequacy of instructional resources to effectively deliver the educational program?
- How does the United States Merchant Marine Academy ensure our curriculum promotes diversity, inclusion, respect for all students, global awareness and cultural sensitivity? How does the United States Merchant Marine Academy work to improve upon the effectiveness of General Education, USCG License, majors, concentrations, graduate programs and Regiment? How does USMMA ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations and design standards?

- How does the Academy work to improve upon the effectiveness of General Education, USCG License, majors, concentrations, graduate programs and Regiment and how does it assess the effectiveness?

Working Group for Standard IV – Support of the Student Experience

Chair: Coach Michael Notebaert, Assistant Athletic Director for Facilities, Head Baseball Coach

Co-Chair: Captain Buck McDermott, Associate Professor, Department of Marine Transportation

Member: Mrs. Kristin Delury, Educational Technology Specialist, Academic Center for Excellence

Member: Dr. Melanie Ross, Department of Humanities

Member: Lieutenant Commander Mark E. Beaudet, Command Chaplain

Midshipman Member: Tyler Reistetter (2024), Baseball Team Captain

Charge: Working Group IV will be focused on analyzing **Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience**, the description of which reads: “Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.” In addition, this Working Group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 8**, “The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes,” and **Requirement of Affiliation 10**, “Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.”

In focusing their analysis, Working Group IV will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that students have access to appropriate resources and support for their academic, personal and social development?
- How does the Academy promote a safe and healthy campus environment, including policies and programs related to student wellness, mental health, and campus safety?
- How does the Academy ensure that students have access appropriate technology resources and campus facilities?
- How does the Academy assess and address the impact of its support services on student satisfaction, learning outcomes and overall student experience?

- What strategies and practices are employed to promote student engagement and involvement in campus life, including extracurricular activities, clubs and organizations?
- What strategies and practices are employed to promote career development and readiness among students, including Sea Year, internships, job placement services, and alumni engagement?

Working Group for Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Chair: Dr. Pamela Bryant, Department of Mathematics & Science

Co-Chair: Dr. Diana Filar, Department of Humanities

Member: Dr. Ping Furlan, Professor, Department of Math & Science

Member: Dr. Robert Ronkese, Professor, Department of Math & Science

Member: Dr. James Garofalo, Associate Professor, Department of Marine Engineering

Member: Dr. Daniel Irving, Instructor, Department of Humanities

Member: Mr. Richard Cain, Director of Waterfront Operations

Midshipman Member: MIDN Charles Ross (2024), Regimental Academic Officer

Charge: Working Group V will be focused on analyzing **Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment**, the description of which reads: “Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution’s students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution’s mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.” In addition, this Working Group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 8**, “The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes”; **Requirement of Affiliation 9**, “The institution’s student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievements throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality”; and **Requirement of Affiliation 10**, “Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.”

In focusing their analysis, Working Group V will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- How does the Academy define and articulate its intended student learning outcomes for each education program?
- What mechanisms are in place to assess and measure student achievement of the intended learning outcomes at the program and institutional levels?
- How does the Academy use assessment data to inform decision making and improve educational programs and services?

- How does the Academy ensure faculty and staff possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively engage in assessment activities?
- What strategies and practices are employed to promote student engagement in the assessment process and maintain their privacy and confidentiality?

Working Group for Standard VI – Planning, Resources & Institutional Improvement

Chair: Captain Peter Kahl, Associate Professor, Department of Marine Engineering

Co-Chair: Commander Emily Gardner, Assistant Professor, Department of Marine Engineering

Member: Prof. Steven Pike, Assistant Professor Department of Marine Engineering

Member: Captain David Palmer, Professor, Marine Engineering

Member: Coach Daniel Paccione, Men’s Lacrosse Coach, Department of Physical Education

Member: Ms. Rebecca MacPherson, Director of Facilities & Infrastructure

Midshipman Member: MIDN Ben Romero (2024)

Charge: Working Group VI will be focused on analyzing **Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement**, the description of which reads: “The institution’s planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.” In addition, this Working Group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 8**, “The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes”; **Requirement of Affiliation 10**; “Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments”; and **Requirement of Affiliation 11**, “The institution has documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related entities (including without limitation systems, religious entities, and corporate ownership) adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to ensure financial stability. The institution demonstrates a record of responsible fiscal management, has a prepared budget for the current year, and undergoes an external financial audit on an annual basis.”

In focusing their analysis, Working Group VI will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- How does the Academy develop and implement a comprehensive strategic planning process that aligns with its mission, vision, and goals? How is it updated and communicated to all its stakeholders?

- How does the Academy allocate its resources, including financial, human, and physical resources, to support its strategic priorities and enhance institutional effectiveness?
- How does the Academy assess and address the effectiveness of its resource allocation processes in meeting the needs of its program, services and stakeholders?
- How does the Academy make informed, data-driven decisions and recommendations when prioritizing institutional improvement plans?

Working Group for Standard VII – Governance, Leadership & Administration

Chair: Commander David Pulis, Assistant Department Head, Department of Marine Engineering

Co-Chair: Dr. Lubomir Ribarov, Associate Professor, Department of Marine Engineering

Member: Ms. Kelly Butruch, Risk Management Officer

Member: Ms. Kourtney Avila, Executive Assistant to the Provost

Member: Ms. Maurina Samuel, Office of the Registrar

Midshipman Member: MIDN Joseph Wiley (2025)

Charge: Working Group 7 will be focused on analyzing **Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration**, the description of which reads: “The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its student, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.” In addition, the working group will consider **Requirement of Affiliation 12**, “The institution fully discloses its legally constituted governance structure(s) including any related entities (including without limitations systems, religious sponsorships, and corporate ownership). The institution’s governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution’s mission is being accomplished”; and **Requirement of Affiliation 13**, “A majority of the institutions’ governing body’s members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The governing body adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members of outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. The institution’s district/system or other chief executive officer shall not serve as the chair of the governing body.”

In focusing their analysis, Working Group VII will be guided by the following Lines of Inquiry:

- How does the Academy ensure effective governance structures and processes that support its mission, goals, and strategic priorities?

- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the Academy’s governing body operates with integrity, transparency and accountability?
- How does the Academy promote a culture of ethical behaviour, diversity, and inclusion in its governance, leadership, and administration?
- What mechanisms are in place to assess and address the effectiveness of the institution’s administration in meeting the needs of its stakeholders and the impacts of the Academy’s governance?
- How well are the Academy’s organizational structure and operating procedures documented and how are they developed, revised and disseminated and by whom?

All Seven Working Groups are also charged with meeting biweekly to: maintain familiarization with the previous Self-Study documents; review all Seven Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation; understand the entirety of the current Self-Study Design and its interrelationships across the Seven Standards and Requirements of Affiliation; comprehensive understanding of the specific Standard the group is affiliated with; delegation of tasks for communication and collaboration with other Working Groups, relevant committees, and Academy personnel that can provide data and information for analysis and reporting; Chairs and Co-Chairs brief the Steering Committee and the Dean’s Advisory Board on Working Group progress; and Working Group Chairs provide the Steering Committee Chair with information for the Self-Study narrative. The Steering Committee and Working Groups will look to **Figure 5: USMMA Assessment Framework** as a reference point for all Self-Study report related assessment activities.

Section 6: Guidelines for Reporting

Each of the Seven Working Groups will develop its own section of the Standards-Based Self-Study Report. The final report is not to exceed 25 pages per Standard, with some Standards requiring more or fewer than 25 pages, depending upon the depth and breadth of its Charges and Lines of Inquiry. Each section will contain the following:

- An overview of the Working Group’s Charge and the Lines of Inquiry it addressed with summary of significant achievements.
- Meaningful, evidence-based responses to the intended outcomes of the Self-Study with an analytical discussion inclusive of both strengths and challenges found within the area.
- An explanation of how the Working Group’s findings and conclusions relate to MSCHE Standards and Requirements of Affiliation, an USMMA mission, institutional priorities set forth in the new Strategic Plan, the Four Pillars, and our Core Values.
- A synopsis of how the Working Group’s Standard, Charges and Lines of Inquiry connect with those of other Working Groups, and of any pertinent collaboration between them.
- Recommendations for maintaining and/or improving upon strengths and actions for addressing challenges identified throughout the Self-Study Process.

The Self-Study Report author/editor, with assistance from the Advisory and Steering Committees, will confer with each of the Working Groups to develop a final narrative that meets MSCHE guidelines and is presented with a clear and consistent voice. It will also accurately represent the efforts of the Working Groups. Care will be taken to ensure that the final report is a concise, readable document for a variety of internal and external audiences, including administrators, staff, faculty, midshipmen, alumni, and the MSCHE visiting team.

All draft and final Working Group reports must be written and saved in Microsoft Office 2019 and submitted electronically as an e-mail attachment to the Chair and Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, or dropped into Microsoft Teams for peer review and feedback, depending upon the nature of the report. All files will be saved with naming conventions that can be easily identifiable such as a Working Group name or number, file title, or date (Working Group I Chapter Final Draft July 2024). Backup copies of all documents will be retained by the Working Group Chairs in their respective folders on the J: drive and in the designated folders on the Blackboard MSCHE Self-Study page.

To ensure consistency across reports, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

Style Guide	Modern Language Association (MLA) Style, 2021
Font:	Times New Roman, 12 point
Spacing:	All narrative body text single spaced. Single line spacing between paragraphs and double line spacing before new subheadings. Single tab indents for beginning of paragraphs
Margins:	Normal 1" all sides
Alignment:	Align text left, unjustified
Lists:	Round bullet format
Acronyms:	Acronyms will be spelled out the first time they are used with the abbreviation in parentheses (abbreviation alone used in future mentions)
Length:	Each Working Group chapter report will be limited to no more than 25 pages per standard
Page Numbers:	Page numbers should appear in the bottom right corner of the page using Arabic numbers (1-10, etc.) without embellishment or punctuation
Headers and Footers:	Do not use headers or footers except for inserting page numbers
Chapter and Major Headings:	Time New Roman 12 point, centered, boldface and capitalize the first letter of each main word (no underlining)
Minor Headings:	Left aligned, capitalize first letter of each main word, boldface and italicize (no underlining)
Use of Numbers:	A number less than 20 can be written as a word, e.g. "six" but larger numbers can be written as numbers. Very large numbers can be written as a combination of numbers and words for the sake of greater clarity, e.g. "60 million dollars"

Use of Dates:	Dates should be in standard American style (January 1, 2024). A comma should follow the year if the sentence continues. References to months and years should not have a comma (February 2014)
Appendices:	Documents and backup information referred to in the main section of the Self-Study report will be added in the appendices. There is no limit on the number of documents contained in the appendices, if they are relevant. Please label documents with the chapter number and sequence number, e. g, 9.1 with 9 representing the chapter and 1 representing the order
General:	Use concise, jargon-free language; active voice, not passive

Section 7: Organization of the Final Self-Study Report

The USMMA Self-Study Report process is an opportunity to examine where we have been, where we are, and where we are headed as an institution of higher education. Meeting the MSCHE Standards and Requirements of Affiliation are of paramount importance, but it is also imperative that we take advantage of an optimal opportunity to reflect upon what we want to be and what kind of midshipmen we develop and graduate.

The Self-Study Report will include an executive summary, an introduction with an overview of the Self-Study process, and seven chapters, one from each Working Group. The report will ultimately integrate the intended outcomes, lines of inquiry, methodologies used by each group to generate findings, evidence provided to substantiate those findings, and conclude with recommendations for future consideration.

The research we conduct, the analyses we examine, and the outcomes we generate should meet external compliance standards but should also meet and exceed our own. With this premise in mind, the Steering Committee and Seven Working Groups, each with their own charges, should approach every task, inquiry, and report throughout this process as instruments by which we are gauging what we are doing and whether we can and should make meaningful improvements.

USMMA Self-Study Report 2025

Chapter 1: Executive Summary

- a. Institutional Overview
- b. Description of the Self-Study/Strategic Plan Interrelationships
- c. Summary of the Self-Study Process

Chapter 2: Introduction

- a. Institution in Review: past, present, future
- b. Departmental, programmatic, and curricular highlights
- c. Policy, process, and procedure updates

Chapter 3: Self-Study Process Summary

- a. Timeline of events
- b. Makeup of the Dean's Advisory Board, Steering Committee, and Working Groups
- c. Review of initial Self-Study Design

Chapter 4: Standard I Mission and Goals

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations
- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 5: Standard II Ethics and Integrity

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations
- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 6: Standard III Design and Delivery of the Student Experience

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations
- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 7: Standard IV Support of the Student Experience

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations
- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 8: Standard V Educational Effectiveness Assessment

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations

- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 9: Standard VI Planning, Resources and Institutional Improvement

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations
- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 10: Standard VII Governance, Leadership and Administration

- a. Introduction
- b. Data Collection & Analysis
- c. Key Evidence & Findings
- d. Action Plan
- e. Future Considerations
- f. Midshipman Reflection

Chapter 11: Conclusion

- a. Summary
- b. Recommendations

Appendices

Section 8: Verification of Compliance Strategy

As part of the MSCHE Self-Study, USMMA will review and attest to its compliance with accreditation-relevant Federal regulations via the *Institutional Federal Compliance Report*. The Office of the Academic Dean and Provost will lead the review with participation from various academic departments, including but not limited to, the Office of the Academy Registrar, the Department of Marine Engineering, and the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid. In addition, the Office of the Superintendent, Office of External Affairs, Office of Legal Affairs, and Office of Academy Financial Management will provide responses to sections of the compliance report. The responsibility for the eight requirements will be assigned as follows:

1. Student Identity Verification in Distance and Correspondence Education – Office of the Academic Dean and Provost, Office of the Academy Registrar, Department of Marine Engineering, Office of Financial Aid
2. Transfer of Credit Policies and Articulation Agreements – Office of the Academic Dean and Provost, Office of the Academy Registrar

3. Title IV Program Responsibilities – Office of Financial Aid, Office of Academy Registrar, Office of Academy Financial Management, Office of Legal Affairs (Maritime Administration)
4. Institutional Records of Student Complaints – Office of the Superintendent, Office of the Academic Dean and Provost, Office of External Affairs, Office of the Academy Registrar
5. Required Information for Students and the Public – Office of the Academic Dean and Provost, Office of the Academy Registrar (Institutional Research), Department of Marine Engineering (ABET), Office of External Affairs
6. Standing with State and Other Accrediting Agencies – Office of Legal Affairs (Maritime Administration), Office of the Academic Dean and Provost, Department of Marine Engineering (ABET)
7. Written Arrangements – Not applicable
8. Assignment of Credit Hour – Office of Academic Dean and Provost, Office of the Academy Registrar

Many of the requirements for institutional compliance with federal regulations are not applicable to USMMA, and they will be explained accordingly in detail in the compliance report. All the findings of the Office of the Academic Dean and Provost, along with any necessary corrective actions, will be compiled into a single, bookmarked PDF file and provided as evidence under Standard II, Criterion 8.

Section 9: Self-Study Timetable

Date(s)	Activity/Task
January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Planning Brief to Academic Dean/Provost and Superintendent
February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IESC Meeting with MSCHE Self-Study on Agenda
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Forum Meeting with MSCHE Self-Study on Agenda
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief to the METERB by the Academic Dean/Provost
September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSCHE Annual Institutional Update (IAU) Submitted
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSCHE Dean's Advisory Board and Steering Committee Members Selected • Selected Members attend the MSCHE Self-Study Institute
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group Members Selected

December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Board, Steering Committee, Working Group Members, and Student Presenters attend the MSCHE Annual Conference
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual VP Liaison Meeting • MSCHE Self-Study Blackboard Page Created
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Steering Committee and Working Group Meetings Begin • Preliminary work on the Self-Study Design
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Superintendent MSCHE Brief • New USMMA Strategic Plan Submitted to Leadership for Review
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSCHE Annual Institutional Update (IAU) Submitted
July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSCHE and Strategic Plan PowerPoints and Timelines Submitted to FACA • Professional Development for New Faculty with MSCHE Workshops
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSCHE Self-Study Design Draft Submitted to the VP Liaison
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP Liaison Visit to USMMA • Feedback Letter Received • Lines of Inquiry Workshop with Steering Committee Members • Lines of Inquiry Workshops with Working Group Members • ABET Self-Study Report Submitted for Review • Superintendent's Cabinet Brief with MSCHE Self-Study Updates on the Agenda
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised Self-Study Design Draft Submitted to VP Liaison • VP Liaison Virtual Meeting with METERB • ABET Re-Accreditation Team Visit
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Await Feedback on Resubmitted Self-Study Design (APPROVED 11/6/2023) • Await Approval of the New USMMA Strategic Plan

December 2023 – May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Board, Steering Committee, Working Group Members, and Student Presenters attend the MSCHE Annual Conference • Working Groups Gather and Analyze Data and Submit Biweekly Progress Reports to Steering Committee
January-February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Chair Selection Process
January – May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Groups Gather and Analyze Data and Submit Bi-Weekly Progress Reports to Steering Committee • Communications Plan Implemented • Bi-Weekly Briefs to the Superintendent’s Cabinet • Self-Study Draft Shared with Campus Community
May-September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Groups Gather and Analyze Data and Submit Bi-Weekly Progress Reports to Steering Committee • Bi-Weekly Briefs to the Superintendent’s Cabinet • Self-Study Report Draft Sent to Team Chair 2 Weeks Before Visit
October-November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Chair Preliminary Visit
January - December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Groups Gather and Analyze Data and Submit Bi-Weekly Progress Reports to Steering Committee • Bi-Weekly Briefs to the Superintendent’s Cabinet
December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Board, Steering Committee, Working Group Members, and Student Presenters attend the MSCHE Annual Conference
January - May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Visit Dates Chosen • Self-Study Revisions and Campus Review • Self-Study Report Finalized Based on Team Chair Feedback and Shared with Campus • Final Self-Study Report/Verification of Compliance/Evidence Inventory

	Uploaded to MSCHE Portal Six Weeks Before Team Visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Study Evaluation Team Visit • Self-Study Evaluation Team Report • Institutional Response
April -June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission Meets to Determine Action

The Self-Study Timetable is managed using a Gantt Chart to track progress of all tasks and milestones related to the Self-Study project. It shows the progression of milestones dating back to 2022 through to the anticipated MSCHE Team Visit in 2025. Note that this timetable and related tasks have been shared with the Steering Committee, Working Groups, and Academy leadership, and administration as part of the Communications Plan (*Figure 6: MSCHE Self-Study Task Tracking Chart Sample*).

Section 10: Communications Plan

In preparation for the Self-Study, there have been numerous ongoing communications to ready the learning community and external stakeholders for understanding of and engagement in the MSCHE Self-Study. These communication activities include Provost/Superintendent briefings; presentations to numerous committees and stakeholders (for example, Faculty Forum Meetings, Town Halls, and governing board meetings); Steering Committee and Working Group member participation in the Self-Study Institute and the MSCHE Annual Conference 2022; Monthly Steering Committee and Working Group Meetings; and meetings with Midshipman Academic Officers. Blackboard (our learning management system) has been employed to host the MSCHE Self-Study Blackboard page for Steering Committee and Working Group members, and the USMMA Facebook and Instagram social media sites have featured the Midshipman Poster presentations at the MSCHE Annual Conference 2022.

Moving forward the formal implementation of our Communications Plan will be to ensure that all community members of USMMA have a clear understanding of what the MSCHE Self-Study is and their role in providing data, feedback, and/or other documents. The Self-Study process should prompt all USMMA stakeholders to reflect upon why we as an institution exist and how we create our graduates. The specific audiences we need to communicate with are inclusive of the Steering Committee and Working Groups; Faculty and Staff; Students; Administration; and the METERB. The overall theme and takeaway of our Communications Plan in a macro sense is that the MSCHE Self-Study report is an opportunity to reflect on what we do best and what we can do better. We want all members of the community to participate in a relevant way and to have a clear understanding of how the MSCHE Self-Study is being conducted and how they may best contribute to it. The most effective methods we can use for communicating with each different audience will include: Faculty and Staff (SharePoint/intranet, Town Halls, Faculty Forum); Administration (Cabinet briefings, SharePoint); Steering Committee and Working Groups (Bi-Weekly meetings; Teams documents; Blackboard). The content needed to

communicate to each audience in a micro sense is illustrated by attached ***Table 3: Communications Plan Chart***.

Section 11: Evaluation Team Profile

The Team Chair will preferably hold the position of Academic Dean or Provost, with specific expertise in shared governance, transformative leadership, government structure, and public policy. Experience working with civil servants, union faculty, and an institution within a system would be helpful characteristics of our chair as well.

The Peer Evaluators will preferably possess expertise in the areas of student affairs, STEM teaching and learning, engineering, support services, assessment, and program evaluation.

Institutions considered to be Comparable Peers:

- United States Naval Academy
- United States Military Academy
- SUNY Maritime College

Institutions considered to be Aspirational Peers:

- Valley Forge Military College
- U.S Army War College
- National Defense University
- National Intelligence University

Institutions considered to be Conflicts of Interest:

- Five Towns College
- Long Island University
- Monroe College

Section 12: Strategies for Managing the Evidence Inventory

The Evidence Inventory will serve as the main repository of documents for the Self-Study. These will include, at a minimum, official orders and instructions directing the business of the Academy, strategic planning data and reports, assessment data collected over the past few years in all divisions of the Academy, and results of various surveys administered to faculty, staff, and students. Though the main purpose of the Inventory is to support the Self-Study, its initial development should also identify gaps in our data-collection processes and lead to the long-term improvement of assessment.

Given the small size of the Academy, compared to other institutions of higher education, it is feasible to start populating the Inventory with all relevant data, either already maintained in central repositories or gathered and processed but not connected to the overall assessment

process. Simultaneously, the Self-Study Working Groups will identify their requirements for documentary evidence, which will lead to further refinements of the Inventory. Additional data, such as surveys, will be collected and analyzed during the process. Completed, the Evidence Inventory should contain only the data relevant to specific claims in the Self-Study, while ensuring that sufficient evidence is provided to document compliance with all standards and their criteria.

Gathering Initial Evidence: Evidence to support the Self-Study will initially be collected and housed within the MSCHE Blackboard hub utilized by all Steering Committee and working Group Members. This will not only aid in the organization of materials specific to each standard, but will also allow for a more selective process for determining what evidence will then be moved to the Evidence Inventory in support of the final narrative.

Refine and Reference: To avoid duplication of efforts and the risk of a “document dump” in the Evidence Inventory, care will be taken to choose evidence that directly supports both the standards and the institutional priorities being addressed in the study. Each Working Group will be tasked with identifying evidence in each Monthly Meeting Report, which will then be used to construct the final self-study narrative with only the necessary evidence uploaded to the Evidence Inventory in the portal.

Types of Data to be Analyzed for Each Standard: The Working Group Chairs/Steering Committee Members and Co-Chairs have selected the following types of data to be analyzed for each Standard throughout the Self-Study process:

The Standard I: Mission and Goals Working Group

- Federal regulations and requirements
- Accreditation requirements (MSCHE, ABET, STCW)
- Annual departmental budget submissions, justification and approval processes
- Review of Regimental Evaluation of Leadership and Assessment Program (RLEAP)
- Physical fitness assessment results
- Professional development opportunities and participation
- USCG License pass rates
- Retention and graduation rates (overall/specified cohorts)
- Survey Results (Graduate, Alumni, National Survey of Student Engagement, Federal Employee Viewpoint, Service Academy Gender Relations, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, Climate Survey, Student Evaluations of Instruction)
- Superintendent’s Instructions, Superintendent’s Notices, Dean’s Memoranda
- IESC Documents

The Standard II: Ethics and Integrity Working Group

- Existing institutional, departmental, and programmatic policies
- Surveys/assessments

- Town Hall and Faculty Forum notes and other recorded opinions, discussion group minutes
- Data from Honor Boards
- Review of all documents relating to ethics and integrity across the Academy
- Review of leadership program
- Review of processes in hiring, tenure, promotion, professional development, separation
- Review of legal processes as they relate to governing documents that guide ethics

The Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Experience Working Group

- Sea Year Surveys
- Dean's Memorandum, Superintendent Instructions
- Comparison of curricular changes
- Review of course syllabi
- Course Catalogs
- STCW/USCG requirements, surveys/assessments.

The Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience Working Group

- Recruitment and Admissions processes and criteria
- Athletics and waterfront recruitment criteria, participation, metrics
- Academic support resources and metrics
- Physical and mental health services and metrics
- Student Activities metrics
- Affinity group participation and activities
- Alumni and parents' association activities
- Sea Year guidance and support
- Industry related programming, career services

The Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment Working Group

- Data collection/survey of comparable institutions
- Data from DoIT, including records of support tickets for particular rooms/units/types of errors
- Student and faculty surveys on tech-oriented issues/needs
- Data from course assessments (quizzes, exams, homework assignments, papers/projects, course grades, standardized tests and licensing exams)
- Senior exit surveys
- Retention reports
- Exit surveys for students who leave – reasons why women, students of color, and/or first gen students leave
- Syllabi and mapping of General Education Learning Outcome (GELO) 4 and Institutional Learning outcomes (ILOs) to course curricula across the Academy
- Demographic data of students, faculty and staff

- Mapping of the various outcomes should be available via Program Learning Outcomes Committee (PLOC)
- Collect data on character-related programs (leadership courses, etc.)
- Track disciplinary incidents/resolutions. Compile a list of leadership roles available to midshipmen (classes, clubs, regiment, etc.), interviews
- Identify challenging courses, programs, activities, surveys/interviews
- Interviews/surveys, alumni success stories
- Faculty survey, FEVS survey, forum bylaws
- Committee records; planning and strategic decisions
- Program Assessments, pass rates on ABET, Coast Guard or Naval exams
- Placement and employment data of employees from last 5 years

The Standard VI: Planning, Resources and Institutional Improvement Working Group

- Previous Campus Master Plans and Strategic Plans
- Meeting documents from the Merchant Marine Academy Requirements for Infrastructure Needs Executive Review (MMARINER) Council
- Financial Working Group documents, Campus Facilities Master Plan and the Capital Investment Plan (both in progress)
- Interviews and surveys will also be used to collect data to substantiate findings, along with the Office of the Inspector General correspondence related to NAPA recommendations

The Standard VII: Governance, Leadership and Administration Working Group

- Campus-wide surveys
- Interviews of personnel throughout campus (management, faculty, staff, and midshipmen)
- Reviews of documents that have been posted on the USMMA intranet of shared files to gather evidence in support of our report
- Existing data in the forms of surveys over the past six years, meeting minutes, and other collected data from multi-departmental committees held regularly as part of the evidence collection to show the continuous improvement of our governance
- Comparisons of our governance structure to similar academies
- Examine the breadth and depth of involvement of external boards, leadership, faculty, midshipmen and faculty in decision-making processes

Upload the Documentation to the Evidence Inventory: The ALO/Director of Institutional Assessment, USMMA Institutional Assessment Data Specialist, and Self-study Steering Committee Chair will work together to determine the final selection and upload of documentation to the Inventory for cross-reference with the completed Self-Study Re

On 22 August 2023, Superintendent Notice 2023-13 appointed a USMMA Institutional Assessment Data Specialist. As such, the Specialist is “authorized to obtain information and data

from all Academy departments in support of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Self-Study Report.” The evidence collected by all Working Groups will be funneled through the Assessment Specialist for organization in the MSCHE Portal.

Figure 1: USMMA Proposed Organizational Chart

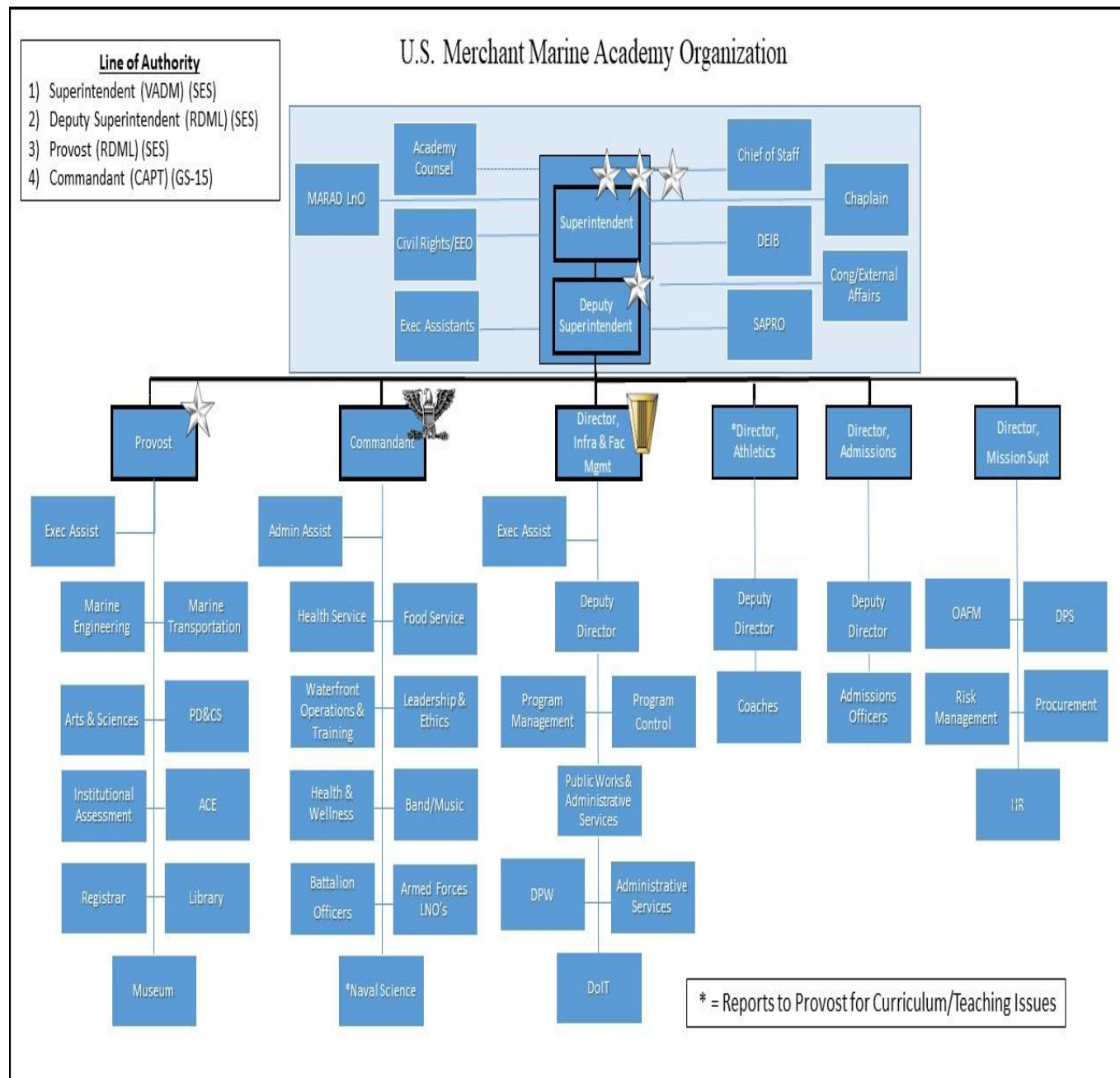


Figure 2: IESC and Committee Flow Chart

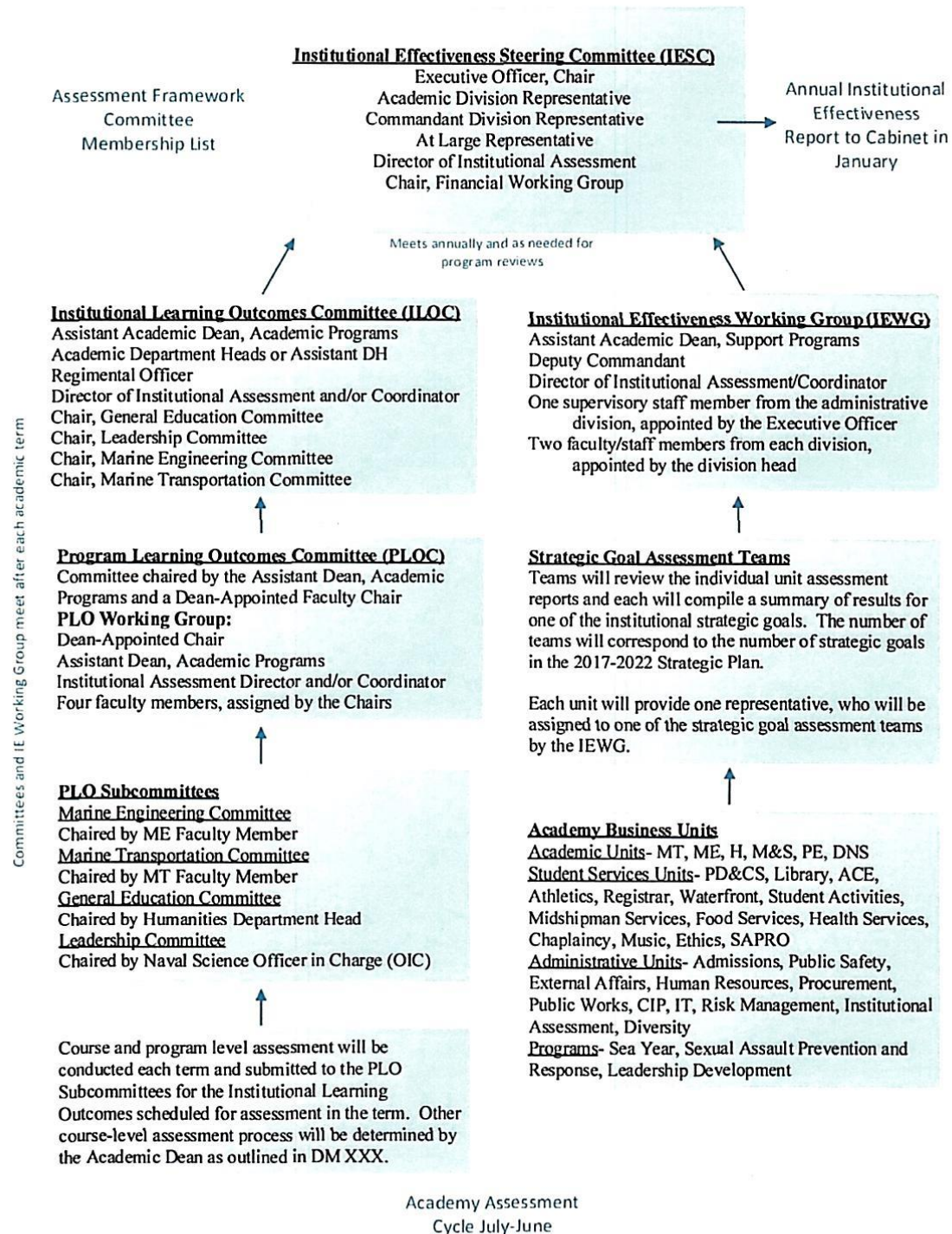


Figure 3: MSCHE Requirements with NAPA Recommendations Excerpt

MSCHE Requirement	2021 NAPA Recommendation	2023 Advisory Board Recommendation
MSCHE - Standard I – Mission & Goals - The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission. An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or Activities (see "MSCHE Requirement" column for attributes):		
1. Clearly defined mission and goals that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. are developed through appropriate collaborative participation by all who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional development and improvement; b. address external as well as internal contexts and constituencies; c. are approved and supported by the governing body; d. guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes; e. include support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity, at levels and of the type appropriate to the institution; f. are publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders; g. are periodically evaluated; 	<p>5.12 Undertake an independent, comprehensive examination of educational outcomes among Midshipmen of different racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and affinity groups.</p> <p>8.1 Develop a strategic human capital plan to guide the Superintendent's future recruitment of senior leaders and managers.</p> <p>8.4 Under the auspices of the Secretary of Transportation's Task Force on USMMA Governance and Culture, USMMA should supplement its 5-year strategic plan with a longer-term vision plan that would cover as much as a 20-year time horizon.</p>	<p>Accreditation #1 - The Academy should complete its Assurance of Learning (AoL) processes by documenting its AoL lessons learned and developing AOL process recommendations.</p> <p>Accreditation #2 - The Academy should allocate adequate resources and prioritize critical academic support processes to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements.</p> <p>Accreditation #3 - The Academy should review and revise the academic schedule to provide more flexibility and address constraints that impact student learning and faculty sufficiency.</p> <p>Accreditation #6 - The Provost and the Academic Departments should leverage academic Advisory Boards to provide curricular and program review, partnerships, and industry pathways for midshipmen.</p>
2. Institutional goals that are realistic, appropriate to higher education, and consistent with mission;		
3. goals that focus on student learning and related outcomes and on institutional improvement; are supported by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services; and are consistent with institutional mission; and		Accreditation #5 - The Academy should strengthen the capabilities of, and accelerate the schedule for, the student information system implementation to effectively support accreditation requirements.
4. periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable.		
MSCHE - Standard II – Ethics & Integrity - Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully. An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:		
1. a commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights;	3.8 Actively promote, fund, recognize, and take other steps to incentivize faculty professional development, as well as joint faculty-student and advanced student research.	

Figure 4: USMMA 2024-2030 Strategic Plan Infographic

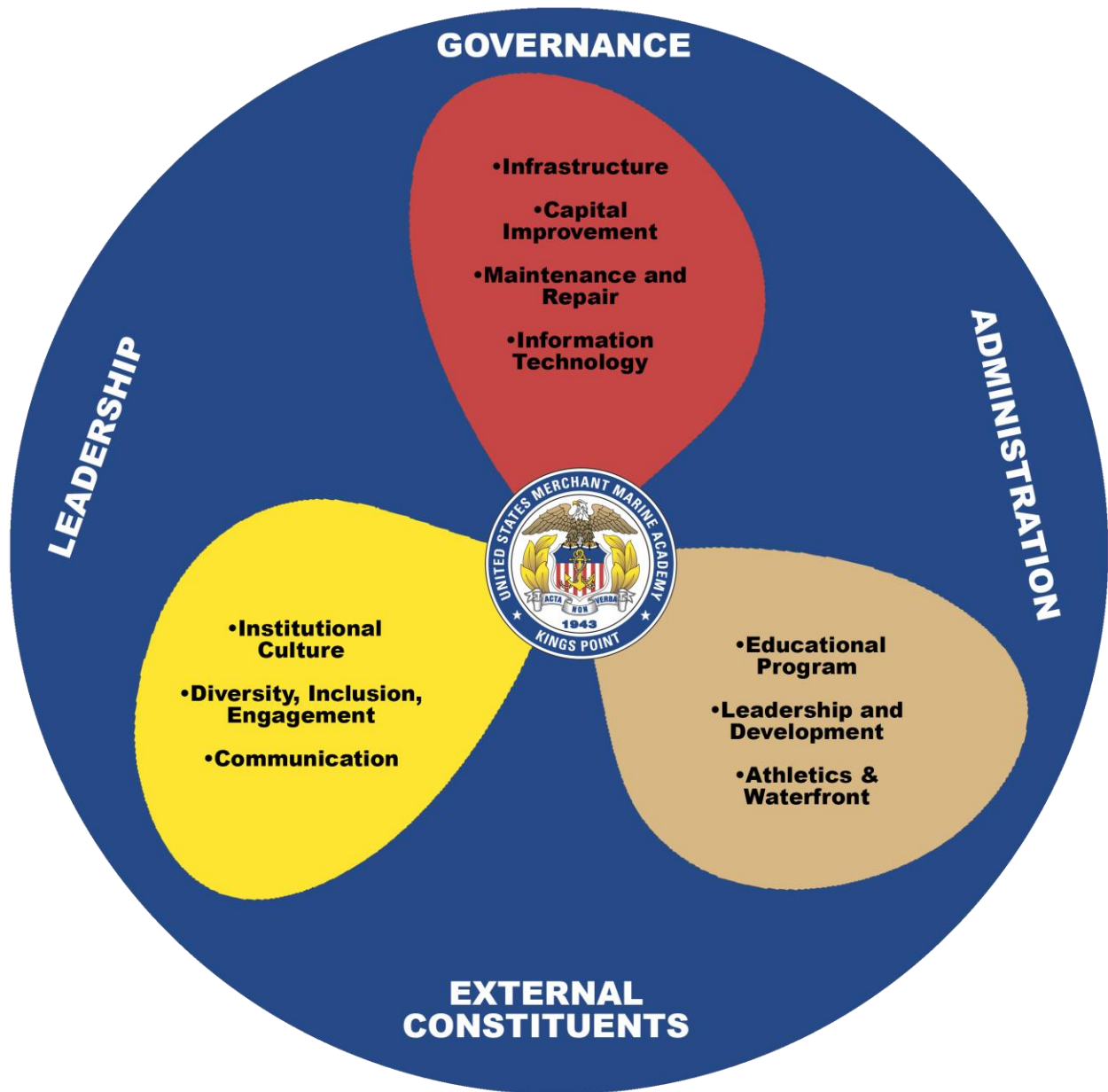


Figure 5: USMMA Assessment Framework



Figure 6: MSCHE Self-Study Task Tracking Chart Sample

MSCHE Self-Study Task Tracking Chart
United States Merchant Marine Academy

Chart Template © 2009-2018 by Venn42.com

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Table 3: Communications Plan Chart

Purpose	Audiences	Methods	Timing
Researching and Developing the Report/Fostering Campus Engagement			
Share data, reports, and other documents as part of the development of the Self-Study report in a secure way.	Steering Committee Members and Working Group Members	Teams Documents; Blackboard	June 2023 through the Conclusion of the Self-Study
	Students	SharePoint; open forums; Regimental representative on steering committee and regimental working group members	June 2023 through June 2024
	External Stakeholders	Interviews and anecdotal data gathering	April – June 2024
Updates and Times for Discussion/Requests for Stakeholder Input			
Update Campus Constituencies about the Self-Study process	Faculty & Staff	SharePoint; Faculty Forum; faculty and staff representatives on Steering Committee to academic departments and non-academic departments; Town Halls with all hands e-mail briefs afterwards; periodic open forums	Continuous updates to SharePoint site; reporting of faculty and staff representatives to divisions; monthly updates at Faculty Forum. October 2023 – June 2024
	Students	SharePoint; student representatives on working groups organized by regimental liaison organizes open	Continuous updates October 2023 – June 2024

		forums; all-hands e-mail brief	
	Cabinet	SharePoint; bi-monthly cabinet updates	Continuous updates on SharePoint site; bi-monthly updates to cabinet; October 2023 – June 2024
	METERB	Updates at METERB meetings	Quarterly at the Board Meetings
Feedback on Narrative from All Constituents			
Collect Feedback on Working Group Reports	Faculty and staff	Feedback from faculty and staff on working groups submissions; feedback on sections of reports after sharing at Faculty Forum; feedback from open forums	April through June 2024
	Students	Midshipman liaison organizes focus groups; uses common hours, tattoos for feedback	April – June 2024
	Cabinet	Feedback on draft report;	July 2024
	METERB	Feedback from board members after review of draft.	August 2024
	Alumni/Other	Feedback after review of draft.	August 2024