

U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY (USMMA)

2024 FOURTH REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

Prepared by the USMMA Academic Advisory Board

Ms. Allison M. Cedeno

Mr. Raymond F. Fitzgerald

Dr. Martha R. Grabowski

Mr. Benjamin G. Inouye

Dr. Henry S. Marcus

Mr. John D. Noonan

Mr. Brian D. Starer, Esq.

August 6, 2024

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

PREFACE

This report provides the U.S. Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) Pete Buttigieg with advice and counsel on the state and future status of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA or Academy), in accordance with the USMMA Academic Advisory Board (Board) Charter. Per 46 U.S. Code 51313, the Academic Advisory Board is responsible for advising the Secretary of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)/Maritime Administration, and the Superintendent of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy on the course of academic instruction and management of the Academy. This is the fourth annual report submitted to the Secretary by the Board. Secretary Chao appointed members to the Board in June 2019, pursuant to 46 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.

The report advises the Secretary, the Maritime Administration (MARAD) Administrator, and the Academy Superintendent on matters that need immediate and continued attention to advance the Academy toward meeting its strategic goals and objectives and to achieve its mission.

The findings in this report are based on direct inspections, meetings and observations made following the Academic Advisory Board's last meeting at the Academy (April 10-12, 2023); several remote video conference (Zoom/Teams) meetings made by the Board and the Board of Visitors with the Academy and with Government officials; individual visits by Board members to the Academy and video conference calls with Academy leaders; oral reports and written documents provided to the Board by faculty and staff; survey data; and individual and small group discussions with midshipmen, faculty, staff, administration, alumni, members of the maritime industry, and higher education officials. The recommendations are based on the Board members' collective knowledge of best practices and emerging trends and issues in higher education and in the maritime industry, and on Board members' expertise.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report fulfills the statutory requirement for the USMMA Academic Advisory Board to report to the Secretary of Transportation about the status, accomplishments and challenges at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy over the past academic year. This report addresses critical areas, including accreditation maintenance, leadership and governance, academic programs, infrastructure needs, student life and Academy culture, and support services.

The Academy has made significant progress in academic year 2023-2024 in a number of areas: in physical infrastructure projects, in infrastructure planning and budgeting at the federal level, in reviewing academic programs, in infrastructure and academic hiring, in implementing and managing the maritime industry safety culture program known as EMBARC (Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture), in technology capabilities on campus and during the midshipman Sea Year, and in strengthening partnerships with the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD), the Academy's oversight and Advisory Boards, and with industry and higher education stakeholders.

However notable these individual efforts are, they are not integrated, are limited by a lack of human capital and leadership, and are being backfitted to the Academy's developing Strategic Plan and Campus-Wide Master Plan. The Academy's infrastructure progress, for instance, has been diminished by the lack of an agreed-upon Strategic Plan and a comprehensive Campus Wide Master Plan; an overwhelming deferred maintenance backlog; a growing and crumbling infrastructure; and the impending departure of the key senior Facilities leader.

The absence of final versions of an agreed-upon Strategic Plan and a comprehensive Campus Wide Master Plan is an accreditation concern, as is the lack of a permanent Provost/Chief Academic Officer. The need to align Strategic Planning and the Campus Wide Master Plan, fill key leadership roles, and align strategic planning with leadership and governance policies, continue to be of concern.

The Academy reviewed its curriculum and program offerings in advance of its Middle States reaccreditation visits in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. It continues to face challenges with faculty staffing, as well as with limited classrooms and learning spaces. Faculty research productivity

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

and curricular development activities need leadership and teaching relief in the form of sufficient additional tenure track and adjunct faculty that could alleviate faculty teaching overloads, allowing faculty to have sufficient time for research, new curriculum content exploration, and connections with industry, and curricular development, all of which would benefit the Academy's academic programs.

The Academy has made significant progress in staffing the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) with trained professionals equipped to handle incidents of sexual misconduct on campus and at sea. However, despite the Academy's progress in hiring trained professionals in the SAPRO, Academy culture, particularly around SASH and gender harassment issues, continues to need attention. The Academy must continue to address the SASH and gender harassment issues that persist on campus and during Sea Year.

The Academy must collect, report and transparently communicate data regarding the progress and impact of the Academy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), as well as the results of the Department of Defense's (DOD's) Sexual Assault and Gender Relations (SAGR) survey, the DOD's On Site Installation and Evaluation (OSIE) audit, and GAO audit, and assess whether the Academy's climate, culture, military misconduct and undesirable behavior prevention programs are genuinely effective and capable of addressing safety climate and undesirable behavior issues.

Despite the noted advancements in academic year 2023-2024, there remain urgent issues such as leadership vacancies, talent acquisition process challenges, and strategic misalignments that demand immediate and sustained attention. This report delineates a series of targeted recommendations designed to address these gaps, aiming to align the Academy with its strategic objectives and national security mandates. The overarching goal is to reinforce the Academy's pivotal role in producing highly qualified Strategic Sealift Officers, ensuring it remains at the forefront of national defense readiness.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) is the nation's primary source for Strategic Sealift Officers, who provide the nation with secure maritime supply chain transportation in times of crisis and national emergency (U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, 2014). The Academy's role as a sole source provider of Strategic Sealift Officers, and its critical role providing licensed merchant mariners and commissioned officers in the Armed Forces, place the Academy and its graduates in the center of the nation's national security, marine transportation, and economic strategic priorities.

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA, the Academy) continues to face critical challenges related to **accreditation requirements, leadership and governance, infrastructure, technology, campus life and human capital needs**. These challenges are long-standing, interconnected and require continued attention. (NAPA, 2021; U.S. Department of Transportation, 2021). **Addressing these challenges is a national security issue, given the shortage of qualified Strategic Sealift Officers (SSOs), the global merchant marine workforce shortage, the human capital challenges facing the Academy, and the post-COVID impacts on higher education institutions.**

This report details USMMA actions and plans during the 2023-2024 academic year with respect to accreditation; leadership and governance; academic programs; infrastructure; student life and Academy culture; and Finance, Human Resources, Admissions, Information Technology and Communication. Prioritized recommendations to address noted shortcomings are identified.

ACCREDITATION

Accreditation by regional bodies is the minimum essential quality standard for learning organizations in the United States. Accreditation activities demonstrate educational effectiveness and continuous process improvement, including an assurance of learning, effective governance and institutional planning, analysis, and reporting.

The Academy is accredited by the Middle States Commission Higher Education (MSCHE) (Middle States, 2016b); its engineering programs are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), and its maritime professional programs are approved by the U.S. Coast Guard under the Coast Guard's Standards of Training and Certification of Watchkeeping (STCW) authority from the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The Academy received Middle States

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

re-accreditation in 2017, after being placed on warning in 2016 because of insufficient evidence that the institution was in compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 7 (Institutional Planning), Standard 2 (Planning, Resources, and Institutional Renewal), Standard 3 (Institutional Resources), Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance), Standard 5 (Administration), and Standard 9 (Student Support Services) (Middle States, 2016a). The Academy was removed from warning in November 2017 after demonstrating adequate progress on these items.

Several accreditation reviews and academic review processes were underway in academic year 2023-2024. The ABET Marine Engineering Department reaccreditation visit occurred in October 2023; facilities and infrastructure items were noted during the visit, and the Marine Engineering Department responded to the ABET items in February 2024. The ABET accreditation Board meets in July 2024 and will provide its reaccreditation report to the Academy by August 31, 2024. The U.S. Coast Guard approved a renewal of the Academy's deck and engine programs for a 5 year period, beginning December 1, 2023.

Key to successful Middle States reaccreditation is an approved Strategic Plan, linked to a Campus Wide Master Plan, both of which provide the foundation for institutional planning, resource allocation, governance and mission execution. The Middle States accreditation standards that were problematic for the Academy in 2016-17 are directly linked to the institution's Strategic Plan, including Requirement of Affiliation 7 (Institutional Planning), Standard 2 (Planning, Resources, and Institutional Renewal), Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) and Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance). An institution's strategic plan provides guidance for its infrastructure planning and its Campus Wide Master Plan. **Although progress was made in developing the Academy's Strategic Plan and Campus Wide Master Plan in academic year 2023-2024, the absence of final versions of both documents is an accreditation concern. It is likely that the need to align Strategic Planning, the Campus Wide Master Plan, and leadership and governance will be the focus of attention in the upcoming Middle States accreditation visit, as will be the failure of the Academy and MARAD to (re)appoint the Academy's statutorily-required Academic Advisory Board—the authors of this report—in advance of the Middle States Chair visit in October 2024.** The Middle States accreditation team Chair visit is scheduled for October 2, 2024, and the Middle States team visit is scheduled for March 3-7, 2025 (Middle States, 2023).

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

A draft Strategic Plan was developed by a campus-wide process in academic year 2023-2024; feedback on the plan required a revision and an extended timeline for completion. **The lack of a ratified Strategic Plan as a guide for all institutional activities, coupled with the lack of a permanent Provost/Chief Academic Officer, are critical accreditation and leadership concerns.**

The mission of the Academy is educating the next generation of future maritime leaders. Faculty hiring is central to executing this mission, and is required to counter current undesirable patterns of faculty teaching overloads, particularly in core academic disciplines such as Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering, where open faculty positions have not been filled. Teaching and swing spaces are also limited, given construction and repairs underway. **Faculty sufficiency in terms of adequate numbers of teaching faculty; adequate time for faculty research, industry refreshment, recertification, and sabbaticals; and sufficient slack in the academic calendar to permit faculty and student research, discovery, exploration and academic publications, are accreditation concerns.**

Successful accreditation processes require that institutions demonstrate that academic processes are assessed on a routine basis, to demonstrate that learning is underway, learning outcomes are measurable and part of the institution's continuous process improvement efforts, and lessons learned and recommendations from the assurance of learning (AoL) processes are articulated, shared and assessed. The Academy's AoL processes are underway and on schedule, and its Institutional, Program & Course Level Objectives have been identified. Two rounds of AoL assessment, as required by Middle States, are underway. Accreditation reviews of student peer tutoring, mentoring and Sea Year processes have been introduced, and the processes are being assessed.

Data-driven approaches to decision making and planning, including an in-place and effective student information system, are key to successful reaccreditation. A new Student Information System is being introduced, and the Admissions, Registrar and Bursar modules are the first to be implemented. **The student information system acquisition and installation processes are foundational to the Academy's ability to deliver on its mission, and must be accelerated so that the Academy can develop data-driven approaches to decision-making, along with an adequate AoL data repository and analytical capabilities..**

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Academy has made progress with respect to the leadership and governance issues identified in the 2016-2017 Middle States report, most notably in its collaboration with MARAD and through the Superintendent's regular participation in MARAD planning sessions, including in the reconstituted Maritime Education and Training Executive Review Board (METERB). Several DOT/MARAD personnel have been detailed to work with the Academy on the development of the Academy's strategic plan, as well as on its infrastructure, leadership and sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) programs. At the same time, however, **the issue of clarifying decision rights between the Academy's staff and DOT staff has not been resolved, nor has the issue of increasing the Superintendent's fiscal and overall authority to be commensurate with that of the Superintendents/Presidents of the other four Federal Service Academies, the State Maritime Academies/Colleges and colleges and universities of similar scope to the USMMA. This was a deficiency noted by both the Middle States and NAPA (2021) reports.**

The Academy faced continued hiring challenges during academic year 2023-2024. Hiring processes are hampered by long hiring timelines, lack of Human Resources administrative support, and difficulties in securing, posting and recruiting for positions. **Several key leadership roles are unfilled (e.g., the Provost, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Officer), and the FAA-detailed senior Facilities Executive will return to the FAA in November 2024. In addition, there are no federal information technology (IT) specialists at the Academy, although searches are underway for a Director of Information Technology (IT), a Deputy Director of IT, and two other senior IT positions. Candidates are being interviewed for the DEIB position, and an advertisement for the Facilities Executive is being prepared (July 2024).**

The previous Provost departed in September 2023, and the role has been filled by two successive interim Provosts. The Provost search in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 failed, and a solicitation for a new search firm to assist in hiring the new Provost is expected in July 2024. The second Provost search will now be supported by a higher education executive search firm. The strength of the candidate pool for the first Provost search may have been impacted by the Academy's proposed organizational structure, which showed the Provost reporting to the Deputy Superintendent, rather than directly to the Superintendent, as in the past; this reorganization may have contributed to a perception that the

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

Provost role, the Chief Academic Officer for the Academy, had been reduced to a 'super Dean' role, and was not adequately valued by the Academy. The Superintendent has since directed that the reporting structure remain as it is, with the Provost reporting directly to the Superintendent. **Ongoing leadership issues, including the lack of a permanent Provost/Chief Academic Officer, are critical accreditation and leadership concerns.**

Another consequence of the shortage of human capital at the administrative level is a limited ability for the Academy to increase and/or conduct maritime career awareness and midshipman candidate recruitment campaigns across broader geographic and demographic spectra. The Academy is particularly limited in its ability to recruit candidates and create maritime career awareness in economically disadvantaged areas where middle and secondary school students might have high interest in a maritime career. A data-driven approach to recruitment and Admissions, coupled with expanded recruitment in areas where middle and secondary school students might have interest in a maritime career, could increase the Academy's Admissions and recruiting return on investment (ROI), and could have the added benefit of benefiting the Academy's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The Academy made progress in academic programming in academic year 2023-2024, completing a curricular review and update in advance of the Middle States visit. The review was motivated by industry and professional needs for new merchant officers, and sought to balance curricular needs across a tight schedule. As a result of the review, a Dean's memorandum was issued to support campus engagement with industry. This support is in addition to the existing Common Hour campus-wide free period for professional development, industry speakers and student research activities, and the 'Conversations with Colleagues over Coffee' program for pedagogical topics. These activities are positive steps towards broadening professional, industry, research and external connections for faculty and midshipmen.

Curricular adjustments are still underway and under consideration, most notably an increase in Leadership curricular content, and new minors and courses, including certificates and micro

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board

FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

credentials, which could provide professional certification opportunities for midshipmen. These new programs, certificates, and microcredentials are difficult to deliver, however, with the existing tight academic curriculum and schedule.

Sea Year Projects and experiences for Second and Third Class Midshipmen were revised and reviewed in academic year 2023-2024, with new information technology and SASH reporting requirements. However, midshipmen reported that the new Sea Year project electronic submission processes and technology were cumbersome and difficult to comply with. As a result, Sea Year Project requirements and curricula are under review in the Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering Departments in an effort to update the curriculum, reflect current industry practices, and leverage available shipboard and satellite technology.

2024 License exams were administered during the week of June 3, 2024, with Final Exams scheduled for the week of June 16, 2024. The Coast Guard requirements for a 2 week period between license exam administration and graduation on June 22, 2024 produce a very tight grading and evaluation timeline. 88 Marine Transportation (Deck) students and 117 Marine Engineering students took the 2024 licensing exam; the first time Deck pass rate was 84%, with 74 students receiving passing grades on 7 out of 7 exams (Table 1). The first time pass rate for Engineers was 63%, with 74 of the 117 students receiving passing grades on 8 of the 8 exams (Table 2). 16 students who took the exam with the class of 2024 need to retest their exams or a module at a Coast Guard Regional Examination Center by mid-July 2024. In addition, 8 students in the class of 2024 were not able to test with their class in June 2024 due to outstanding academic course issues that must be resolved before they can test. Tables 1 and 2 also illustrate the 10% decline in Marine Transportation (Deck) majors taking the exam between 2018-2024, and the 20% increase in Engineering majors taking the license exam.

License Exam Results-Marine Transportation (Deck)									
Year	Number Sitting	First Time Pass	First Time Pass	Partial Retake Percent				Full Retake	
		Numbers	Percent	1 Module	%	2 Modules	%	Numbers	%
2018	97	82	85%	15	15%	0	0%	0	0%
2019	107	79	74%	20	19%	6	6%	2	2%
2020	98	73	74%	17	17%	5	5%	3	3%
2021	109	38	35%	61	56%	7	6%	3	3%
2022	100	75	75%	21	21%	4	4%	0	0%
2023	102	80	78%	17	17%	2	2%	3	3%
2024	88	74	84%	12	14%	2	2%	0	0%

Table 1. USMMA Class of 2024 Deck License Exam Results (USMMA Provost's Office report, July 2024)

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

License Exam Results-Marine Engineering (Engine)									
Year	Number Sitting	First Time Pass	First Time Pass	Partial Retake Percent				Full Retake	
		Numbers	Percent	1 Module	%	2 Modules	%	Numbers	%
2018	97	93	96%	3	3%	1	1%	0	0%
2019	89	87	98%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%
2020	105	102	97%	0	0%	2	2%	1	1%
2021	119	109	92%	6	5%	3	3%	1	1%
2022	121	97	80%	8	7%	11	9%	5	4%
2023	110	69	63%	20	18%	9	8%	12	11%
2024	117	74	63%	27	23%	4	3%	12	10%

*Table 2. USMMA Class of 2024 Engineering License Exam Results
(USMMA Provost's Office report, July 2024)*

The class of 2024 Deck and Engineering license exam pass rates are similar to those of the class of 2023, although the Deck License exam pass rate was 6% higher in 2024, compared to the 2023 Deck License exam pass rate (Table 3). Prior to the class of 2023, license exam pass rates were much higher; the first-time pass rate for Engineering majors from 2018 to the Class of 2021 was in the 90th percentage range. For Deck Students, the first time pass rate was 85% in 2018 and then stayed in the mid-70% range until 2023, with the exception of the Deck pass rate in 2021, which was 35%.

Academic Year	Deck	Engine
2020	74%	97%
2021	35%	92%
2022	75%	80%
2023	78%	63%
2024	84%	63%

*Table 3. USMMA Deck and Engineering License Exam Pass Rates, 2020-2024
(USMMA Provost's Office report, July 2024)*

The Academy does not believe that COVID learning had an impact on the first time pass rate declines; rather, the pass rate was believed to be impacted by new questions introduced by the U.S. Coast Guard into the licensing exams taken by the USMMA and the State Maritime Academies. Table 4 shows that the license pass rates at USMMA are the same, or in many cases higher, than those at the State Maritime Academies. At USMMA, the Marine Engineering Department is reviewing the engineering pass rate statistics from the past two years and considering different ways to prepare the students.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

Module	Ave. Score USMMA	Ave Score Other Academics	Ave. Score USMMA	Ave Score Other Academics	Ave. Score USMMA	Fail Percentage New Questions	Fail Percentage Old (Exposed) Questions	2024 Average Score Other Academics
Engine Exams								
3A. Motor Plants I	82	79	77.69	78	72	52	14	69
3B. Electrical	88	84	81.2	81	81	48	12	78
3C. Motor Plants II	82	80	76.14	79	79	38	12	73
3D. Steam Plants I	89	88	87.55	87	89	19	10	87
3E. Engineering Safety	94	93	90.31	91	82	38	7	78
3F. Steam Plants II	94	90	91.22	87	81	38	13	81
3G. General Subjects	78	78	77.19	79	80	37	15	74
3H. Gas Turbine Plants	95	92	86.47	87	80	23	9	69
Deck Exams								
5A. Rules of the Road	95	93	97.82	94	97	N/A	N/A	94
5B. Chart Plot	90.5	79	92.27	77	93	N/A	N/A	80
5C. Deck General	87	83	87.54	81	93	N/A	N/A	86
5D. Near Coastal	98.2	87	96.12	87	97	N/A	N/A	91
5E. Deck Safety	87.6	81	87.55	80	84	N/A	N/A	83
5F. Oceans	92.7	81	89.32	78	94	N/A	N/A	87
5G. Nav General	85.4	80	87.49	81	85	N/A	N/A	83

Table 4. USMMA, State Maritime Academy Deck & Engine License Exam Pass Rates, by Module, 2020-2024 (USMMA Provost's Office report, July 2024)

Academic leadership at the Academy continues to be a challenge, given the absence of a permanent Provost. The academic climate is similarly challenging. Faculty generally ‘make do’ when faced with heavy teaching loads and regular overloads; inefficient faculty hiring processes; denied sabbaticals; limited opportunities for intellectual renewal, refreshment and industry externships; and perceptions that needed infrastructure investments are competing with academic needs. A faculty teaching load analysis was undertaken in academic year 2023-2024 and adjunct faculty were approved, with priorities for new hires. Hiring processes, however, are slow and one key academic department had to deny sabbaticals for eligible faculty, sabbaticals that are important for faculty curricular updating, industry refreshment and faculty research.

The Academy continues to face challenges with faculty staffing, as well as with limited classrooms and learning spaces. Faculty research productivity and curricular development activities need leadership and teaching relief in the form of sufficient additional tenure track and adjunct faculty. Substantial infrastructure construction and maintenance activities are underway, offering hope for improved academic support and infrastructure. During construction and maintenance activities in the first part of academic year 2024-2025, beginning in July 2024, mobile classrooms will create swing space for teaching and learning.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

Persistent academic needs include department and academic leadership control over budgets. Middle States standards highlight the need for data-informed decision-making and the ability to allocate budgets to institutional priorities, as identified in the institution's Strategic Plan. **The lack of the authority and ability to allocate budgetary resources around academic priorities, along with the lack of an approved Strategic Plan and a permanent Provost/Chief Academic Officer, are accreditation concerns.** The Academy's academic programs could also be strengthened with increased participation and evidence gathering from academic departments, as well as from non-academic programs and departments such as Athletics and the Regimental System.

The **Academy's Blackboard Learning Management System** was updated in academic year 2023-2024 and a **new student information system (SIS)** is being introduced in 2024. The SIS Admissions module has been introduced, and Registrar information, including course information, student registration and Bursar information, is being loaded. Blackboard and the new SIS are anticipated to provide critical reporting and assessment tracking over time in support of Middle States accreditation reporting requirements.

A **Midshipman Student Advisory Board** was established by the Superintendent and her team in academic year 2023-2024. This Board, mandated by the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), comprises 20 midshipmen across all 4 years, representing the interests, backgrounds and experiences of the student body. The Student Advisory Board is required to meet with the Secretary of Transportation at least once each academic year, with the MARAD Administrator at least twice each academic year, and met with MARAD officials and the Deputy Secretary of Transportation in May 2024. Members of the Student Advisory Board addressed the MARAD EMBARC SASH/Safety Culture meeting on April 15, 2024, and joined MARAD's Mariner Work-Life Balance Symposium, which followed MARAD's EMBARC briefing in April 2024.

The Academy could benefit from the experience, insight and guidance of a variety of external Advisory Boards, including Advisory Boards for the Provost and for the Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering Departments. These Boards existed in various forms over the years, providing critical input to academic programs; they are important in accreditation, as

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

they can demonstrate industry and career connections and research pipelines for faculty, students and administrators. Advisory Boards can provide valuable insights and industry perspectives, which are critical in maintaining curricular and academic content currency. Boards can also provide candidate pools and networks important for faculty hiring, guest speakers, industry seminars, and project and club engagement. **External Advisory Boards should be established, prioritized and funded in academic year 2024-2025.**

The Academy has made strides to introduce opportunities for external engagement for midshipmen and faculty through the new curriculum free period. More needs to be done, however, to strengthen opportunities for midshipmen in terms of career planning and services, and in providing internships, externships, fellowships and graduate student support, as well as opportunities for midshipmen to engage in research, professional and honorific societies. These opportunities also support faculty professional development, and can lead to joint student-faculty scholarship, projects, patents and discovery, all important aspects of a healthy academic institution.

External funding opportunities for faculty and students should be encouraged and incentivized, and the Kings Point Scholars program, and support for the Fulbright, Marshall and Rhodes Scholarship programs, among other graduate scholarship programs, should be reinstituted and reinvigorated. The Academy's unique and strategic experiential learning focus, across academics, athletics, the regimental system, leadership and at-sea experiences, and extracurricular activities, should be more widely communicated, branded and funded.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Comprehensive infrastructure planning requires a framework that integrates physical infrastructure, technology, fiscal resources and human capital plans, aligned with an institution's strategic plan. Following MARAD's release of the Academy's FY 2023 Capital Improvement Plan (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2023) in January 2023, the Academy proposed and made significant progress in academic year 2023-2024 in all four areas, driven in large part by accreditation timelines and pressures. However, the efforts are not integrated,

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

are limited by a lack of human capital and leadership, and are being backfitted to the Academy's developing strategic plan.

The Academy's infrastructure program progress in academic year 2023-2024 has been notable, but has been diminished by the lack of an agreed-upon Strategic Plan and a comprehensive Campus Wide Master Plan; an overwhelming deferred maintenance backlog; a growing and crumbling infrastructure; and the impending departure of the key senior Facilities leader. The Academy is working to secure MARAD approval for the proposed USMMA Strategic Plan, and it expects to adopt a long-term Campus Wide Master Plan in FY 2025. Both plans are long-delayed and much-needed, as they provide guidance and direction for academic and extracurricular program planning, infrastructure development and maintenance, hiring and program investment. Moreover, they also provide Congress with sufficient lead time for required appropriations, which are key to executing the Plans.

Several challenging critical infrastructure projects are underway simultaneously, stretching thin the Academy's limited human and capital resources available. Top priorities include completion of the \$50M Storm Water Management System and reconstruction of the \$20M Sea Wall, both of which were approved in the FY24 budget, as well as replacement of the campus fiber optic IT backbone and IT closets, the latter slated for December 2024 completion. Alongside these projects are the Samuels Hall Simulation Center renovation with a Summer 2025 completion schedule, and the \$22M Fulton Gibbs Engineering building renovation slated for 2026 completion. The 3 boilers that provide heat to multiple buildings on campus were replaced in Spring 2024. Deferred maintenance planning also continued in academic year 2023-2024, with a focus on roofs, windows and facades, as well as heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems and plumbing.

Sinkage on Academy property following rainfall dictates that a new Storm Water Management System precede any new buildings on Academy premises; the lack of a Campus Wide Master Plan and Storm Water Management System is a challenge for both new construction and building deferred maintenance. **The Academy is developing the requirements and design for a Storm Water Management System, and is undergoing an Environmental Assessment and market survey to determine how best to proceed. A procurement agreement for the system is expected by December 2024.** The impending departure of the Facilities Executive in November 2024, and the

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

on-going search for a replacement Facilities Executive, add leadership uncertainties to the Academy's infrastructure challenges.

Implementation of new campus fiber IT backbone began in academic year 2023-2024, which will provide a critical technology foundation for the Academy. Fiber is currently being installed and the project is expected to be completed in late winter 2024. Work has also begun to improve and relocate the Academy's IT closets, which were found to be inadequate to support the new fiber optic ring. Construction of a new main IT data center began in Spring 2024, with a study considering tradeoffs and IT allocations for on-premise and cloud data and technology. The new IT data center is expected to be operational in Fall 2024.

Academic year 2023-2024 was the Academy's first year in its 5-year, \$42M contract to provide campus-wide maintenance services for the Academy's mechanical systems and current infrastructure. The maintenance support service system was intended to automate preventative and on-going maintenance and repair support activities, and to support the Academy's move to more data-driven infrastructure maintenance and repair decision-making processes. The first year resulted in significant learning, however: the Academy lacked an authority to operate (ATO) the maintenance service systems, which are intended to manage and minimize risk to technology systems on campus. As a result, new ATO efforts are underway, with priority accorded to an HVAC repair and maintenance system that supports 80% of all campus mechanical systems. **The maintenance and repair systems require consistent and adequate funding, and identifying and prioritizing areas with the highest vulnerability.**

Investment in state-of-the-art technology infrastructure, including information technology and Wi-Fi capabilities, is necessary to support the Academy's educational, research, and national defense missions. In October 2023, midshipmen transitioned to the use of a Personal Identification Verification Interoperable (PIV-I) card to support multifactor authentication (MFA) access to the Academy's network and buildings; this transition was required for Academy compliance with President Biden's May 12, 2021 Executive Order 14028, *Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity*, which requires that all federal agencies adopt MFA and encryption for both stored and in-transit data. PIV-I cards, the form of MFA required in the Department of Transportation, are linked to each midshipman's personal computer.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

Input from the Midshipman Advisory Council to the Superintendent highlighted a number of challenges with the PIV-I implementation, including broken and non-working cards and readers, Internet and barracks access denied, and lack of 24 hour IT support for midshipmen on campus. During Sea Year, when Internet and network connectivity can be limited, midshipmen using PIV-I cards had difficulty accessing their Academy computers, which are required for electronic submission of Sea Projects, and for writing reports, developing and editing videos, and completing electronic assignments.

IT support for midshipmen on ships during Sea Year was similarly unavailable. Many midshipmen returned from sea with laptops in need of support, as well as needs for software updates and reimaging; this support was not available and was a hurdle for midshipmen trying to submit their Sea Projects on time, electronically, using required Academy computers. The new PIV-I cards also impeded midshipmen connectivity through their personal phones and computers, many of which were used to stay connected with family and friends, and which are important for midshipman mental health.

The Academy successfully addressed password issues upon the return of midshipmen from sea by providing a blanket 5-day waiver of PIV-I requirements and a blanket extension of the due date for Sea Year projects. However, the inability of midshipmen to access Academy systems, networks, email and IT support while at sea created significant challenges and increased burdens and levels of stress for the Academy's Sea Year midshipmen. Similar challenges have arisen from the inability of midshipmen, whether on Sea Year sailings or simply off-campus away from their laptops, to access Academy email or networks on their personal devices, as was possible prior to January 2024 via a WebMail application.

The absence of federal technology leadership at the Academy compounds technology access hurdles for midshipmen, staff and leadership, and overloads the Academy's leadership and decision-makers, who are tasked with making important technology decisions, often without requisite background, experience or training. The Academy benefits from collegial and supportive assistance from the Chief Information Officers and IT staff at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, but this supportive guidance is no substitute for permanent, qualified IT leadership at the nation's premier institution for next generation merchant officers.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration EMBARC (Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2024) policies regarding midshipmen at sea during Sea Year have increased technology and communication requirements for midshipmen, the Academy, and commercial shipping companies hosting midshipmen during Sea Year. Midshipmen on Sea Year are provided a satellite phone, and current MARAD and USMMA EMBARC policies require a weekly e-mail from a midshipman on Sea Year training to their Company Officer; commercial shipping companies hosting midshipmen during Sea Year are required to check in with midshipmen every two weeks.

Midshipmen, USMMA and commercial shipping communication and reporting requirements have shifted several times since the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that originally required midshipmen to go to sea with a satellite communication device. In July 2024, 46 USC 51322(d) provides that “The Maritime Administrator shall ensure that a cadet participating in Sea Year . . . (2) is equipped with an appropriate means of communication and has been trained on its use; [and] (3) has access to a helpline to report incidents of sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking that is monitored by trained personnel . . .” In academic year 2023-2024, midshipmen reported challenges with juggling reporting and communication requirements at sea, particularly when the Garmin communication units that were provided in 2023 would only work in certain areas of the vessel, when the device was in direct line with the satellite, and/or when midshipmen were out on deck. As a result of these experiences, beginning in Spring 2024, midshipmen were given satellite phones to take to sea that could connect to Starlink capabilities aboard many commercial vessels. SASH issues around audio and video surveillance capabilities aboard ship to protect midshipmen at sea and room keys are in the process of being clarified in the EMBARC statute as the U.S. Coast Guard updates the language and the NDAA in December 2024 goes into effect.

Efforts to facilitate midshipman connectivity, and to enhance their psychological safety, mental health and SASH and gender harassment reporting, both on campus and at sea, are laudable. However, Academy technology planning efforts could benefit from tracking current communication and IT developments, including direct-to-satellite communications for midshipmen on Sea Year training. The Academy’s efforts to provide Starlink connectivity in midshipmen satellite phones is one effort in this direction.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

In academic year 2023-2024, the Academy is devoting more attention to technology challenges and requirements, and the reorganized IT unit, once populated, will report directly to the Deputy Superintendent. Despite these efforts, however, more attention to senior IT leadership is required at the Academy, and improved IT planning and processes are required, including requirements for systematized and timely user testing of new technology. User and pilot tests might have prevented difficulties with the new Sea Year technology introduction, which midshipmen reported to be outdated and unworkable in many instances. Investments in fiber optic and wireless capabilities that will improve midshipman connectivity on campus are underway; similar attention to and user testing of communication and connectivity devices during Sea Year are also needed. Incorporating connectivity in safe spaces for meetings to accommodate women and minority groups should be considered in new construction and maintenance projects.

STUDENT LIFE AND ACADEMY CULTURE

Following requirements in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and MARAD's resulting EMBARC (Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2024) program, the Academy has made significant progress in staffing the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) with trained professionals equipped to handle incidents of sexual misconduct on campus and at sea. Despite the progress in hiring trained professionals in the SAPRO office, however, USMMA culture, particularly around SASH and gender harassment issues, continues to need attention.

USMMA midshipmen, along with students from the other four federal service academies, participated in the Department of Defense's Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) survey in March 2024, and midshipmen who were at sea in March 2024 will participate in November 2024. **USMMA results from the 2022 Department of Defense's (DOD's) Service Academy Gender Relations survey showed that an estimated 26.2% of USMMA women (55 midshipmen) and 2.8% of USMMA men (21 midshipmen) reported that they experienced unwanted sexual contact in the previous academic year. These estimates reflect a significant increase compared to 2018 when the rate was 11.0% for women and 1.4% for men (U.S. Department of Defense, 2024). In the same 2022 survey, an estimated 60% of USMMA women (126 midshipmen) and 11% of USMMA men (81 midshipmen) experienced sexual harassment in the past academic year;**

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

these estimates also reflect a significant increase compared to 2018 when the rate was 41% for women and 4% for men (U.S. Department of Defense, 2024).

Unwanted sexual contact remains an underreported crime, with 20% of USMMA women indicating they filed an official report and indicated they did so to stop the alleged offender(s) from hurting others and/or because someone encouraged them to file a report. Over two-fifths of USMMA women indicated they experienced retaliation as a result of reporting their unwanted sexual contact event. Of those who did not report the event, the majority did not report because they took care of the problem themselves by avoiding the alleged offender, did not want more people to know or felt uncomfortable making a report (U.S. Department of Defense, 2024). The Academy has participated in the SAGR survey, which is usually issued every two years, since 2012. **The results of the SAGR survey will guide planning, assessment, programming and continuous learning to reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) at USMMA. These results, and the trends they suggest, underscore the importance of the SASH and EMBARC programs underway at the Academy.**

The Academy will participate in the Department of Defense's On Site Installation and Evaluation (OSIE) program to audit USMMA military misconduct processes, following the U.S. Secretary of Defense's order in August 2023 requiring OSIE evaluation of the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. OSIE is a DoD program that focuses on a military installation's undesirable behavior prevention capabilities and the installation's ability to effectively address risk for sexual assault, harassment, and suicide (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023a, b). The results of the Academy's OSIE are expected to be available in August 2024, guiding planning, assessment, programming and continuous learning to improve campus safety climate.

The Academy will also participate in a GAO audit on August 5, 2024, issuing surveys to midshipmen, in response to an FY24 NDAA mandate to

- (1) assess the extent that USMMA's honor and conduct systems are similar to each other and to Uniform Code of Military Justice processes, including punishments given and whether any honor or misconduct issues are included on military records upon commissioning; (2) the extent to which the military academy's honor and conduct systems provide common due process protections; (3) the extent to which the military academy's honor and conduct

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

systems enable the academies to measure student conduct and performance trends; and (4) perceptions and attitudes of cadets and midshipmen toward their academy's honor and conduct system.

In light of this scrutiny and as evidenced by empirical evidence, it is clear that continued action is necessary to enhance the overall culture at the Academy. These suggestions are not exclusive to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy; the U.S. Coast Guard is in the midst of cultural and SASH concerns, particularly around SASH accountability, transparency and reporting (ATR) in their Operation Fouled Anchor (U.S. Coast Guard, 2020; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2022; Hicken, Ellis, Ash, Brown & Devine, 2023), and in a recent Cultural Competence study conducted by NAPA at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy that identified related cultural concerns (NAPA, 2022). Similar calls for enhanced sexual misconduct policies, procedures, and cultural improvements have also been raised at state maritime academies, as highlighted in reports from California Maritime Academy (Cal Maritime News, 2021) and SUNY Maritime College (2022). **The Academy should continue its SASH education, prevention and reporting programs, and transparently communicate the results of the SAGR survey, and of the 2024 OSIE and GAO audits.**

Once the new DEIB Officer is on board, the Academy is planning a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) study focusing on gaps, goals, and plans. This effort is imperative so that **DEIB goals and plans are developed, clearly articulated, and widely shared across the Academy.** Efforts should focus on achieving a broader and more diverse representation of marginalized groups within the Regiment of Midshipmen, with a specific emphasis on gender and people of color. **It is important that programming, resources and physical spaces are dedicated on campus for minorities and women to promote diversity, foster a sense of belonging, encourage networking and mentorship, address unique challenges, and celebrate achievements.**

Training programs should be developed and implemented for faculty and staff to promote a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at the Academy. This training should prioritize **inclusive language and communication** for fostering a respectful environment. **These programs should also cover a range of essential topics, including but not limited to understanding unconscious bias; recognizing and addressing discrimination and harassment; and allyship and advocacy.** By implementing comprehensive DEIB training that covers these key areas, the

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

Academy can ensure that faculty and staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to actively contribute to a campus culture that values diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

Post-COVID programming at higher educational institutions has placed renewed emphasis on ‘whole person’ development, engaging student body, mind and spirit, as essential elements of holistic, healthy and life-long learning and practices (Otto, Bertel, Lyngdorf, Markman, Andersen & Ryberg, 2024; Zhao & Watterston, 2021). To that end, the Academy’s Office of Student Activities has increased programming during academic year 2023-2024, particularly for the 40% of midshipmen who are not involved in athletics. Examples include formal and informal company programs, programs on campus on weekends, and team movements for groups as diverse as the Midshipman Concert Club, the Cyber Defense Club, the Yoga Club, and the Rock Climbing Club, as well as for religious groups and affinity groups. Leadership opportunities beyond regimental roles or club officer roles, as well as peer support systems, including roles for midshipman Morale Officers and Petty Officers—who work within their companies to support their fellow students, developing programming, internal and external events—are important in the development of the whole student.

Although investments have been made in improving Student Life for midshipmen at the Academy, and the new Director of Student Life brings external and higher educational experience, the Student Life staff and programming resources are limited and not prioritized. Career Services are also important for midshipmen at the Academy and after graduation. In academic year 2023-2024, career planning and development support was available with new support from Core Group Consulting, which provides career and job application preparation, forecasting and career option support. These investments in student support and career planning are of high priority but are under resourced.

**FINANCE, HUMAN RESOURCES, ADMISSIONS, INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Support processes that are critical to the Academy’s mission are significantly under-resourced and of low priority. The need for senior Financial and IT leadership is acute and a critical accreditation item. Staff-level support in these areas and to support internal governance functions is also severely lacking.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

Admissions processes that support the development of the Strategic Sealift Officers (SSO) pipeline lag processes at other federal and state service academies, do not adequately track with NCAA recruiting cycles, and do not effectively leverage prep schools. **Strikingly, there is little capacity to increase student enrollment in response to defense or industry needs. In addition, the academic, physical, human capital, technology, and connectivity infrastructure to support increasingly technical industry and SSO needs (e.g., autonomous and semi-autonomous vessels and operations, AI and machine learning ashore and aboard ships, offshore wind technology, cybersecurity, and interoperable defense service operations) is under resourced.**

Communication processes at the Academy are fragmented, disjointed and under resourced. A new Communications Officer and support staff have been hired, and communication among MARAD, DOT and USMMA appears to be improving, but more needs to be done. Information sharing is dependent on personal relationships, rather than on open, transparent and effective institutional communication practices or policies. This dampens the effectiveness of new administrative hires, policies, and programs, which can be trapped by antiquated communication modes and practices, and hampered by historical feuds. Academic communication processes lack standard processes, accountability, or performance metrics, responding to current events, but not anticipating future needs or vulnerabilities. Academy constituents expressed frustration with breakdowns in communication, particularly around key strategic programs such as critical infrastructure planning, academic hires, administrative priorities, and funding decisions.

The Academy's communication processes are inadequate, and cannot support professional technology and communication requirements, including hosting a remote or hybrid professional meeting without interruption and/or significant IT support. Government, regulatory, stakeholder, and academic expectations for reliable, consistent, and effective communication capabilities and processes are heightened in the post-COVID era, given the wide proliferation of and experience with on-line collaboration and communication platforms and technologies. **Academy communication and IT systems are not adequate to support a thriving academic enterprise with a global mission, and worldwide connections, resources and partners, all critical needs to achieve the Academy's mission, and a concern for accreditation.**

Key to success in a high performing accredited higher educational institution are effective stakeholder engagement and communication processes. Both stakeholder engagement and

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

communication processes at the Academy are in need of attention. The Academy has made progress to engage stakeholders so that the academic curriculum reflects student, industry and stakeholder needs and expectations. Stakeholder engagement with faculty, students, the USMMA Parents Club, alumni and others was an important input to the development of the well-resourced Academic Center of Excellence (ACE), which responds to post-COVID learning gaps. Stakeholders have also been engaged in the development of the Academic Strategic Plan for 2024-2029, which is under development, and is being socialized and reviewed by Academy constituents. The Maritime TV group and the Kings Point Class of 1969 alumni have developed monthly industry-relevant training for midshipmen. **To extend these efforts and institutionalize stakeholder input to academic processes, the Provost and Academic Departments should leverage Advisory Boards to provide curricular and program review, and to develop academic and program partnerships, and industry pathways for midshipmen.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **ACCREDITATION. The Academy must finalize and publish an approved Strategic Plan, linked to a Campus Wide Master Plan, and resolve persistent leadership and governance issues between the Academy and MARAD; and the Academy and MARAD must immediately (re)appoint the Academy's statutorily-required Academic Advisory Board, whose appointments have lapsed due to bureaucratic inattention. All of these topics are likely to be items of attention in the upcoming Middle States accreditation visit.** Addressing these issues is a national security issue and an existential Academy challenge that threatens the pipeline of qualified Strategic Sealift Officers (SSOs) and the global merchant marine workforce, and is of primary importance given the human capital challenges facing the Academy and post-COVID impacts on higher education institutions.
2. **ACCREDITATION. The Academy must implement an integrated data-driven data and information system to inform academic, administrative, regimental, financial and human capital decision-making.** Technology leadership must be prioritized and resourced, and adequate human capital must be devoted to developing state of the art technology to support the Academy's academic, research, cybersecurity and national military and economic missions and accreditation requirements.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

3. **LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE.** The Academy must address the persistent decision rights questions between MARAD and the Academy, and address the pressing human capital deficiencies in key leadership positions, including the Provost/Chief Academic Officer.
4. **LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE.** DOT, MARAD and the Academy must increase the Superintendent's fiscal and overall authority to be commensurate with that of the Superintendents/Presidents of the other four Federal Service Academies, the State Maritime Academies/Colleges and colleges and universities of similar scope to the USMMA. This was a deficiency noted by both the Middle States and NAPA (2021) reports.
5. **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.** The Academy must address faculty sufficiency issues in terms of adequate numbers of teaching faculty; adequate time for faculty research, industry refreshment, recertification, and sabbaticals; and sufficient slack in the academic calendar to permit faculty and student research, discovery, exploration and academic publications are accreditation concerns.
6. **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.** The Academy must address persistent academic needs for department and academic leadership control over budgets in order to support data-informed decision-making and the ability to allocate budgets to institutional priorities, as identified in the institution's Strategic Plan.
7. **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.** The Academy must implement and leverage external guidance and support for academic programs, including the experience, insight and guidance from external Advisory Boards, including Advisory Boards for the Provost/Chief Academic Officer, and, at a minimum, for the Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering Departments.
8. **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.** The Academy should continue growth and development of the external speaker series, and continued growth and development of the Midshipman Advisory Council, as both are opportunities to engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of a healthy academic learning and professional development environment.
9. **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.** The Academy must develop, support, and incentivize external funding opportunities for faculty and students, including the Kings Point Scholars program, along with Fulbright, Marshall, and Rhodes Scholarship programs, among others, as fundamental to the Academy's educational and research mission.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

10. **INFRASTRUCTURE.** The Academy must implement comprehensive infrastructure planning with a framework that integrates physical infrastructure, technology, fiscal resources and human capital plans, aligned with the Academy's strategic plan.
11. **INFRASTRUCTURE.** The Academy must accelerate investment in state-of-the-art technology infrastructure, including information technology and Wi-Fi capabilities, to support its educational, research, and national defense missions.
12. **INFRASTRUCTURE.** The Academy must devote more attention to user testing of new technology and pilot studies in order to prevent difficulties with new technology introduction, including technology required during Sea Year. The Academy must incorporate state of the art connectivity throughout the Academy, and in safe spaces for women and minority groups.
13. **CULTURE.** Academy culture, particularly around SASH and gender harassment issues, continues to need attention, despite the Academy's progress in hiring trained professionals in its Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO). The Academy must continue to address the SASH and gender harassment issues that persist on campus and during Sea Year.
14. **CULTURE.** The Academy must collect, report and transparently communicate data regarding the progress and impact of the Academy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), as well as the results of the Department of Defense's (DOD's) SAGR survey, the DOD On Site Installation and Evaluation (OSIE) audit, and GAO audit, in order to assess whether the Academy's climate, culture, military misconduct and undesirable behavior prevention programs are genuinely effective and capable of addressing safety climate and undesirable behavior issues.
15. **CULTURE.** The Academy must focus increased attention on development of the 'whole person' in its learning and living activities, including increased support for engaging body, mind and spirit, as essential elements of holistic, healthy and life-long learning and practices. The Academy must focus increased attention and resources on all midshipmen, including those who are not involved in athletics, and provide greater support for formal and informal company programs, programs on campus on weekends, teams, affinity groups and clubs. The Academy must increase support for leadership opportunities beyond regimental roles or club officer roles, including peer support roles, and provide

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

increased Student Life staff and programming resources, including those for Career Services.

16. **HUMAN CAPITAL.** The Academy must address its Academic, Facilities, Human Resources and Technology Leadership gaps with an accelerated hiring plan, and the development of an integrated Human Capital Plan for orderly leadership and succession planning.
17. **COMMUNICATION.** The Academy must strengthen and broadly communicate to internal and external stakeholders and constituents its strategic sealift mission, and its unique and strategic experiential learning focus across academics, athletics, the regimental system, leadership development and extracurricular activities.

REFERENCES

Cal Maritime News. 2021. [State Maritime Academies Urge Action on Sexual Assault in Maritime Industry](#). 15 October. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

Hicken, M., Ellis, B., Ash, A., Brown, P. & Devine, C. 2023. [CNN Uncovered a Damning, Secret Investigation into Sexual Assault at the US Coast Guard Academy](#). CNN.com, 12 July. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. 2016a. [Report to the Faculty, Administration, Advisory Board, and Students of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy](#). Prepared after study of the institution's Self-Study Report and a visit to the campus on April 3-6, 2016. June. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. 2016b. [U.S. Merchant Marine Academy](#). 23 June. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. 2023. [Standards for Accreditation and Requirements for Affiliation](#). July. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). 2021. [Organizational Assessment of the United States Merchant Marine Academy: A Path Forward](#). November. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). 2022. [An Assessment of Cultural Competence at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy](#). February. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

Otto, S., Bertel, L. B., Lyngdorf, N. E. R., Markman, A. O., Andersen, T., & Ryberg, T. 2024. Emerging Digital Practices Supporting Student-Centered Learning Environments in Higher Education: A Review of Literature and Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(2), 1673-1696.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Academic Advisory Board
FOURTH ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD REPORT • AUGUST 2024

SUNY Maritime. 2021. [State Maritime Academies Presidents Seek to Create Change Within Maritime Culture](#). 17 October. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. Coast Guard. 2020. [Fouled Anchor-Final Investigation and Enclosure](#). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard. 31 January. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO). 2022. [Report to Congressional Committees: Sexual Assault. DOD and Coast Guard Should Ensure Laws Are Implemented to Improve Oversight of Key Prevention and Response Efforts](#). Washington, D.C. 22 March. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. Department of Defense. 2023a. [Department of Defense \(DoD\) Actions to Transform Climate and and Enhance Prevention of Harmful Behaviors at the U.S. Military Service Academies](#). Washington, D.C. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. Department of Defense. 2023b. [2023 Military Service Academies On-Site Installation Evaluation Report](#). Washington, D.C. 21 June. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. Department of Defense, Office of People Analytics. 2024. [2022 United States Merchant Marine Academy Service Academy Gender Relations Survey](#). Washington, D.C. Report No. 2023-026. January. Retrieved 28 January 2024.

U.S. Department of Transportation. 2021. [MARAD Has Made Progress in Addressing NAPA Recommendations Related to Mission Focus, Program Alignment, and Ability To Meet Objectives](#). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Inspector General. Report STS2021028. 7 July. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration. 2023. [FY 2023 USMMA Capital Improvement Plan Annual Report](#). January 2023. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration. 2024. [Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture \(EMBARC\)](#). 13 June. Retrieved 28 June 2024.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. 2014. [Strategic Sealift Officers](#). 22 July. Retrieved 2 June 2024.

Zhao, Y. & Watterston, J. 2021. The Changes We Need: Education Post COVID-19. *Journal of Educational Change*. 22:1, 3-12. doi: 10.1007/s10833-021-09417-3. Epub 2021 Feb 18. PMID: 38624465; PMCID: PMC7890782.