

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA)
Advisory Board

2026 Annual Report
To the Secretary of Transportation

Prepared by the USMMA Advisory Board

Dr. Martha R. Grabowski, KP '79, Chair

Ms. Allison M. Tenorio, KP '08 (*until February 16, 2026*)

Dr. Ronald Clark

Mr. Raymond Fitzgerald

RADM Sinclair Harris, USN (retired)

RADM John Mauger, USCG (retired)

LT DeVar Jones, USNR, KP '18

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PREFACE

This sixth annual report of the USMMA Advisory Board provides the U.S. Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) Sean P. Duffy with advice and counsel on the state and future status of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA or the Academy), in accordance with the USMMA Advisory Board (Board) Charter. Per 46 U.S. Code § 51313, the USMMA Advisory Board is responsible for advising the Secretary of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)/Maritime Administration (MARAD) Administrator, and the USMMA Superintendent on the course of academic instruction and management of the Academy, and on matters that need immediate and continued attention to advance the Academy toward meeting its strategic goals and objectives and to achieve its mission. Members of the Board were appointed by the Secretary of Transportation in January 2025.

The findings in this report are based on direct inspections, meetings and observations made before, during and following the Advisory Board's last meeting at the Academy (December 2, 2025); a remote video conference (Teams) meeting (March 30, 2026); individual visits by Board members to the Academy; and 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, emerging trends and issues in higher education and in the maritime industry, and on Board members' expertise.

This report adopts a 'stop light' coding to reflect opinions on observed gaps and the status of the Board's previous recommendations. Consistent with other stop-light charts, RED translates to the most critical and/or the most at-risk items due to the severity of condition and/or the lack of progress on the items. GREEN connotes the least critical or least at-risk items due to progress or lower severity. YELLOW is in the middle of the two and reflects that progress is being made, but that the status is still cautionary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USMMA leadership has made meaningful progress in several critical areas, including facilities planning, academic hiring, and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response/Sexual Assault-Sexual Harassment (SAPR/SASH) support. However, significant delays remain in infrastructure modernization, governance alignment, investment in academics and mariner training, and IT upgrades. Midshipmen quality-of-life issues continue to limit readiness and morale.

This annual report takes on added importance with the President's Executive Order on American Maritime Dominance and the release of the America's Maritime Action Plan (MAP) in February 2026. While this group had no role in the development of the MAP, the actions identified are consistent with the Advisory Board's findings and recommendations. Specifically, Pillar II of the MAP calls for improvements to USMMA infrastructure to arrest degradation and support future growth. Pillar II also calls for investments in mariner training and education, modernizing facilities with new simulation technology, and partnering to promote shipbuilding and mariner development. These recommendations should be supported by USMMA and DOT.

This 2026 USMMA Advisory Board report includes an abbreviated scorecard on key initiatives, Appendix 1, showing mixed progress on prior year recommendations. The 2025 Advisory Board report [1] was organized into immediate, mid- and long-term recommendations. As such, some recommendations have not yet been fully implemented. A renewed focus and timely action is imperative, especially given current administrative momentum and commitment. Where applicable, this report calls attention to the outstanding recommendations from prior years, without explicitly describing the recommendation or prior year details. As such, this report is a continuation of earlier work.

Several urgent items require DOT and Congressional action: significant infrastructure and academic resource allocation, hiring approvals, leadership and governance clarity, and mission alignment support. The percentage of graduating midshipmen pursuing national security and mission-critical billets as Strategic Sealift Officers (SSOs) is not aligned with the Academy mission and requires institutional, DOT, and DoD support. Coordinated communication, messaging and partnerships require significant investment and are key to strengthening the Academy's mission alignment and accomplishment. USMMA needs to re-establish its thought and maritime industry leadership and DOT needs to fund substantial updates to the curriculum and the academic infrastructure, including faculty; hardware, software, and AI tools; research and industry partnerships; laboratories and training vessels; and equipment and technology, in light of national security needs; maritime security priorities; educational and technology advancements, and demographic shifts.

2026 is a bellwether moment of institutional and educational momentum for USMMA. The President has made American Maritime Dominance a centerpiece of his tenure. USMMA has developed the infrastructure modernization plan and filled leadership vacancies. DOT leadership is on board. All must work together to take action swiftly to leverage this momentum and catapult USMMA into the next generation of maritime education and industry leadership.

Academics



Summary: The hiring of a full-time Provost is a key accomplishment, but much work remains. While some progress has been made on curricular review and industry partnerships, all of the 2025 recommendations require further action. The academic programs require more faculty depth and modernized labs in order to meet the Nation's needs. Sea Year is a defining feature of the academic program, but the program requires refinement and additional financial and stakeholder support. DOT and USMMA should act now to ensure that USMMA has the necessary authorities, funding and policies in place to substantially refresh the academic program.

Observations:

The Academy has ceded its maritime educational and industry thought leadership role to other maritime entities as it tackled significant institutional governance, infrastructure, accreditation, and resource concerns. The Academy needs to reassume this role and provide maritime educational and industry leadership by partnering with the US Coast Guard, other maritime academies and maritime training institutions to develop updates to STCW (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) and licensing requirements in light of national security, maritime industry, educational institutions and technology needs and advances.

The Academy received Middle States accreditation in June 2025. Follow up reporting in June 2026 provides a comprehensive response to issues with Standard 6 (Resources, Data-Driven Decision-making for Assessment) and Standard 7 (Leadership and Governance). The Academy and the Middle States team have led strong progress on reaccreditation, including strengthened assessment practices; however, gaps remain in planning, leadership, and resource alignment.

The arrival of the new Provost in December 2025 provides focus for needs for faculty hiring; curricular refreshment; industry and maritime partnerships; strengthened educational mission alignment; and academic infrastructure investment, including personnel, classroom, library, simulation and hardware/software investments.

The USMMA would benefit from a more rigorous planning and budgeting process, as well as more consistent and a significantly increased funding commitment. Until 2026, the Academy was leveraging the Academy's lagging HR practices and funds from unfilled full-time billets to cover longstanding gaps in academic operating expenses, including labs, hardware, software, licenses, engineering and other equipment. The Academy has begun to identify and itemize the full academic Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Financial Management Regulation &

Equipment (FMRE) personnel, IT, technology, equipment, and software license budgets required to position the Academy as a premier 21st century maritime academy.

Reformed HR practices, first-ever departmental inputs to yearly consolidated resource requests, and a clearer vision of academic resource needs in a 21st century mission-driven academic institution have now identified significant unbudgeted academic resource requirements. Workflow and automation analyses leveraging existing AI and other software tools could identify additional academic and academic support needs, trends and opportunities. Transparent processes to identify and track academic CIP and FMRE budgets are underway, but at a fledgling level.

Some curricular refresh efforts and improvements to laboratory and simulator capabilities are underway, but lag educational and industry needs. Faculty and midshipmen express interest in but need capacity to expand professional credentialing opportunities in AI [2]; cybersecurity; cloud and enterprise systems; energy (LNG, hydrogen, ammonia, nuclear, hybrid, etc.), autonomous, and multi transportation modal (e.g., maritime-space) systems; project management; and ethics training. Microlearning modules could infuse salient educational materials and topics within and outside of courses, as additional learning opportunities in a broad curriculum refresh. Partnerships with other maritime academies and federal service academies, with classification societies (ABS, DNV/Lloyds, etc.), and with maritime educational institutions that offer microlearning, professional credentialing and experiential learning opportunities have not been sufficiently explored.

Maritime Transportation and Marine Engineering Departmental Advisory Boards are in need of development and support to provide input to curricula; Sea Year project requirements, content and processes; internship, externship, apprenticeship and Sea Year opportunities; as well as for resource development, and faculty, staff and midshipmen intellectual growth. Departmental Advisory Boards are not engaged in regular periodic department consultations, limiting faculty and student professional development and the ability to leverage lessons learned across the industry, an accreditation gap. Faculty and midshipman travel and research support is limited, as is support for faculty and student professional society memberships, club meetings and engagement with technology, maritime, port, and naval architecture societies and members, all of which are important for faculty and student professional development.

The once-premier status of the Academy among worldwide and national maritime academies has diminished. Congressional reviews have noted gaps in linkages, partnerships, and best practice sharing opportunities between the Academy and academic, technology and ethics/Honor Board/leadership thought leaders at the other maritime and service academies and in the maritime industry. These connections are lacking and need to be re-established.

Academy faculty hiring lags curricular needs, requires long lead times, and remains difficult due to HR policies limiting incentives for Military Sealift Command (MSC) applicants/candidates. The recent USMMA Human Resources Director hire offers some hope that these lags and needs will be addressed. Recent attention has focused on providing relevant and relatable MSC seagoing personnel in instructional roles.

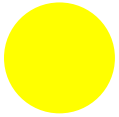
Recommendations:

The last three Advisory Board Reports [1] have recommended a series of improvements to strengthen the academic program by modernizing the curriculum and restoring maritime research and thought leadership to USMMA. *These detailed recommendations still require further actions to implement, as described in Appendix 1, which provides an executive assessment of the recommendations from the Fifth Annual Report.* The Board encourages the new Provost to take action on these recommendations and to utilize existing AI and software tools to identify academic and academic support services workflow improvements supporting budget allocations and benefitting the Academy's mission. The following recommendations are specific actions that DOT can take to enhance the Provost's ability to drive these changes:

- Increase the operational budget for USMMA to \$250M per year, approximately double the current level. The added funds are needed to support investment in academic infrastructure – personnel; hardware, software and AI tools; research and industry partnership support; laboratories and training vessels; equipment and technology—to address persistent under-resourced allocations, and align academic investments with the significant resources being invested in the Academy's physical infrastructure.
- Re-evaluate and modify the faculty hiring process so that timelines and instructional needs to recruit, hire, and retain faculty are met.
- Obtain additional authority, as necessary, and establish a funding mechanism (modeled after the U.S. Coast Guard Academy), to allow USMMA faculty to solicit and manage academic research, including securing faculty and student research travel.
- Obtain additional authority, as necessary, and establish a mechanism to allow USMMA to partner with industry sponsors to renew laboratories and curriculum by bringing in current state of the industry capabilities.
- Develop academic Departmental Advisory Boards to further engage industry, research and other academic institutions in the development of the next generation of maritime industry leaders.
- Monitor and include international regulatory developments, particularly those that pose major impacts to the industry, such as the International Maritime Organization's 2023 GHG Strategy and future STCW competency updates tied to 2050 emissions targets, in curriculum development, certifications, and training programs.
- Align certification pathways and emerging technology training with changing maritime workforce needs that are driven by industry feedback and partnerships, including such topics as decarbonization, alternative fuels, digitalization, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and autonomous systems.
- Expand and assess curricula and training, including external certifications (e.g., cybersecurity; AI; cloud, enterprise, energy (LNG, hydrogen, ammonia, nuclear, hybrid), autonomous and multi transportation modal (maritime-space) systems; project management; and ethics training); and internships, externships and experiential learning options, to prepare future mariners for present and future challenges.
- Develop and implement standardized curricula, campus policies, non-technical skills training, and educational and training materials regarding team building, safety culture, organizational resilience and best practices from other high hazard industries, including

the risks of alcohol use and misuse, sexual misconduct, and the development of healthy maritime safety cultures aboard ship and ashore [3].

Sea Year



Summary: Sea Year remains a defining feature of the USMMA experience but requires enhanced psychological, safety, technological and financial support. Midshipmen report better communication but inconsistent support while at sea, and continue poor reports about 3/c midshipmen assignments on MSC vessels, and experiences aboard those vessels. Midshipmen Sea Year reporting requirements have improved over the academic year, but need to be updated. Midshipmen relate frustration and disconnects between Sea Year project requirements and the technology, systems and processes they encounter at sea. These disconnects do not prepare midshipmen for success at sea or ashore.

Observations

Sea Year educational requirements are antiquated and misaligned with current educational technology and industry needs. Opportunities for midshipmen learning at sea are governed by policy choices and administrative preferences, rather than optimized student learning. Examples include all 3rd Class midshipmen being assigned to Military Sealift Command vessels for their first Sea Year experiences. Unsatisfactory Sea Year experiences aboard MSC vessels, including unsupportive crew interactions and lack of senior shipboard leadership support, continue this year, and are the topic of on-going conversations between the Academy and MSC. DOT is currently addressing constraints due to EMBARC and SOLAS-compliant vessel requirements limiting midshipmen abilities to pursue industry learning on tugs, ferries, Great Lakes and other non-SOLAS vessels, and aboard foreign flag vessels during Sea Year, which should expand midshipmen experiential learning and career opportunities. Further exploration is needed for Sea Year simulator and autonomous vessel assignments; partnerships with European Union and other maritime nations; cybersecurity, computing/AI, uncrewed aerial, surface and subsurface systems operations; and other industry and DoD partnerships, including shipyard, naval architecture and marine engineering professional assignments where SSOs and maritime leaders are needed; all of these opportunities could improve midshipmen professional skills, enhance mariner readiness, and support USCG STCW and USMMA mission requirements.

Midshipmen report better communication but inconsistent support while at sea. Midshipman Sea Year reporting requirements have improved over the academic year, but need to be updated given currently available shipboard and shoreside technology and systems. Midshipmen relate


frustration with paper- and postage-based Sea Year submission requirements, and disconnects between Sea Year project content and requirements and the capabilities and the technology, systems and processes they encounter at sea. These disconnects do not prepare midshipmen for success at sea or ashore, and do not support STCW safety and USMMA mission effectiveness requirements.

Recommendations

- Establish a formal annual Sea Year review using midshipman feedback, industry partner input, and placement outcome data to identify gaps and implement targeted improvements.
- Review, report on and revise as needed current Sea Year programming choices that assign all 3/c midshipmen to MSC vessels for their first Sea Year tour. Expand current conversations with MSC to review midshipmen Sea Year assignments so as to develop meaningful peer and mentoring experiences for midshipmen aboard MSC ships.
- Commission an Academy-MSC Task Force addressing midshipman adverse Sea Year experiences aboard MSC ships, including review and consideration of yearly surveys from Sea Year, from the Sexual Assault, Prevention and Response (SAPR) Office, and from graduation exit surveys. Continue to develop with MSC and other shipping companies incentive programs, including faculty and midshipmen stipends, research funds, credentialing and training opportunities, and accelerated licensing programs, to encourage faculty and midshipmen engagement with the maritime industry.
- In cooperation with the USCG, modernize and expand the Sea Year program:
 - Encourage faculty and administration to engage in USCG licensing and certification workshops and working groups to align mariner credentialing requirements with industry needs, technology advances and future maritime mission requirements.
 - Expand valid options for midshipman Sea Year professional experience and development to include varied modes (autonomous, semi-autonomous, vessel-space, rail-vessel, offshore and energy vessel support operations), sectors (ferries, tugboats, inland vessels, vessel-space interface and support vessels, etc.), and operations (shipyard, ship design, classification society, and cold iron Reserve vessel assignments).
- Update Sea Year project requirements, reporting and content:
 - Align midshipman tasks with current and future shipboard and shoreside technology and systems, industry needs, and needs for mariner skills, growth and continuous learning.
 - Leverage Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering Department Advisory Boards to provide input to Sea Year project requirements, content and processes; engage these Department Advisory Boards in yearly reviews of Sea Year processes, project requirements and lessons learned, and of progress on Sea Year learning objectives.
 - Assess Sea Year project requirements against learning objectives; develop KPIs for professional development, and document year-over-year progress and improvements, including lessons learned and best practices.

- Remove perceived barriers and inefficiencies to improve Sea Year efficacy:
 - Improve onboard communication access and strengthen crisis response protocols.
 - Expand automation and transparency of Sea Year financial reimbursement.
- Improve the Sea Year experience for Midshipmen and Faculty:
 - *Digitalize Sea Year Projects*: Transition Sea Year Projects from physical assignments to digital final submissions on an education platform to provide easier tracking and accountability for both midshipman and faculty.
 - *Increase Hands-On Competency Assessments*: Where feasible, develop hands-on individual and team demonstrations of competency working with the crewmembers to prepare midshipmen as industry leaders.
 - *Require Sea Year Oral Presentations*: Require midshipmen to deliver oral presentations following Sea Year assignments in front of key faculty, industry leaders, and midshipmen to improve experiential learning, and develop midshipmen communication and leadership skills. Elevate Sea Year presentations into a yearly signature capstone event with an industry-sponsored graduation prize.

Infrastructure



Summary: The Academy's physical infrastructure continues to show signs of strain from decades of deferred maintenance. While the addition of a new Facilities Executive has improved planning processes, execution delays persist.

Observations:

The Academy's physical infrastructure continues to show signs of strain from decades of deferred maintenance. While the new Facilities Executive has improved planning processes, execution delays persist. Progress is notable in leadership hiring and planning, and in IT infrastructure, particularly with the deployment of the Academy's fiber ring and Murphy Hall pilot test, but execution in other areas lags due to bureaucratic constraints. Deferred maintenance still impacts mission readiness. Examples of the challenges include:

- Samuels Hall progress remains behind schedule.
- HVAC, water, and sewage issues are improved in some areas but unreliable in others.
- IT and classroom technology remain inconsistent.

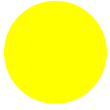
Adding to the challenge of achieving the infrastructure modernization plan is a significant lack of funding. Although \$201.5 million was authorized for the USMMA in the NDAA signed into law on December 18, 2025, only \$50 million of that total is earmarked for infrastructure spend. The remainder is for operations. \$50 million does not come close to meeting the construction management plan requirements outlined in the \$1.02 billion (over 10 years) Campus

Modernization Bill introduced in March of 2025. Moreover, of that \$50 million authorized under the 2026 NDAA, zero funding has yet to be appropriated by Congress (to date) in any of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development spending bills.

Recommendations:

- DOT and USMMA must work together with Congress to secure a commitment and authorization for consistent future funding to modernize the Academy and position it to enable the nation's maritime enhancement objectives, as outlined in the MAP and the nascent SHIPS Act draft legislation.
 - Specific immediate action should include a joint effort by USMMA Government Affairs and DOT leadership (and staff) towards key members of Congress in a coordinated and transparent capital allocation process aimed at securing much needed funding for USMMA Capital Expenditures from the \$200 billion supplemental request DOD sent to the White House to cover costs related to Operation EPIC FURY.
- DOT leadership and the USMMA Superintendent must work together to align and agree on the Superintendent's decision rights, a persistent issue identified in all previous Advisory Board reports [1]. Once agreed, the Superintendent should be vested with the needed authorities.
- USMMA should more strongly press its infrastructure priorities, e.g., barracks, academic processes and classroom modernization, with DOT to ensure alignment on priorities and funding efforts.

Midshipmen Quality of Life



Summary: Midshipmen have enhanced ability to report and track maintenance issues but continue to experience inconsistent heating, cooling, Wi- Fi connectivity, and dining quality. SAPR staffing has improved but further cultural strengthening is required, with attention to results from empirical data documenting midshipmen experiences and challenges.

Observations:

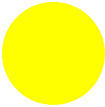
Quality-of-life challenges remain the most mission-impacting issues for students. Attention to midshipmen health, safety, and well-being is of the highest priority, but does not receive adequate attention, given current disconnected efforts by DOT and MARAD regarding (1) evaluation of the effectiveness of the EMBARC program; (2) research into interventions that can improve well-being, including access to exercise equipment, safety teams, connectivity, shift schedules and mariner support and assistance programs; (3) improved access to mental health and substance misuse disorder support by insurance coverage, EAPs and clinician licensing rules, and (4) recommendations for standardized curricula, campus policies, non-technical skills training and educational and training materials regarding alcohol use and misuse, sexual misconduct and the development of health maritime safety cultures [3, 5]. Sexual Assault, Prevention and Response (SAPR) and Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) requirements, reporting and monitoring are disconnected and not harmonized across the maritime industry, leading to one set of requirements and policies for USMMA midshipmen on Sea Year assignments, and other requirements and policies for state maritime academy (SMA) and other mariners at sea. The result is a disconnected set of provisions covering midshipmen during Sea Year and mariners following graduation. Connecting Academy programs and focus to administrative quality of life efforts requires increased cooperation and partnerships among DOT, MARAD, USCG and the Academy to provide gap-filling funding, goal prioritization, and broad participation across the Academy from faculty, staff, administration and midshipmen.

Recommendations:

- DOT, USCG and MARAD should resolve disconnects regarding EMBARC provisions and evaluation, including harmonizing SAPR and SASH provisions across the maritime industry, including all maritime academies. These efforts should include consultations by DOT, USCG and MARAD with the USMMA Sea Year Office and SAPRO Office leaders, faculty, and midshipmen.
- The following efforts should be undertaken by the Academy, in partnership with DOT and MARAD:
 - Develop metrics and regular assessment and reporting on Quality of Life at USMMA to facilitate long-term progress.

- Accelerate HVAC and dorm renovations.
- Increase dining budgets and meal flexibility.
- Expand midshipmen mental health, well being and SAPRO resources, in line with needs identified through yearly Sea Year, SAPR, biannual SAGR, and yearly graduation exit survey results.
- In partnership with the Provost and Academic programs, enhance midshipmen experience with and knowledge of mariner well being and safety culture best practices and programs through standardized curricula, campus policies, non-technical skills training, and educational and training materials regarding team building, safety culture, organizational resilience and best practices from other high hazard industries, including the risks of alcohol use and misuse, sexual misconduct, and the development of healthy maritime safety cultures aboard ship and ashore [3].
- Encourage midshipmen, faculty and Sea Year/Career Services Office participation in EMBARC evaluation processes. Continue SAPR Office efforts and studies of insurance company and clinician licensing to cover mariner and midshipmen mental health and substance misuse support; and developing mariner support networks.
- Fund, incentivize, publicize and reward faculty, staff and midshipmen participation in programs to improve midshipmen quality of life, including participation in research and program reviews; serving on expert panels; presentations at industry and maritime conferences; and recommendation programs to improve midshipman quality of life. Such efforts could also be aligned with Baldrige Performance Excellence Award criteria [4] for improving institutional resilience and operational excellence.

Admissions



Summary: Recruiting remains challenged by strong national competition for high-achieving students, particularly in STEM fields. Due to resource constraints, admissions staffing levels remain below what is required to support a highly competitive national recruiting strategy.

Observations

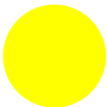
The Admissions strategy requires modernization to compete effectively for top-tier candidates. Current efforts do not fully align with the Academy's evolving academic priorities in AI, maritime cybersecurity, advanced propulsion systems, and emerging maritime technologies. Recruiting efforts also lack a clearly defined value proposition that highlights the Academy's unique leadership development, Sea Year experience, and national security mission. In a competitive higher education environment, proactive, targeted outreach is essential to attract students with

strong STEM preparation and long-term maritime interest. The Admissions strategy requires modernization to compete effectively for top-tier candidates.

Recommendations

- Expand recruiting staff and provide sufficient travel and outreach resources to support national-level engagement.
- Fully integrate Student Information System (SIS) data into admissions planning, including yield modeling, geographic targeting, and follow-up engagement timelines.
- Align recruiting materials and messaging with the Academy's future academic focus areas, including AI, maritime cybersecurity, hybrid energy systems, and autonomous maritime operations.
- Develop targeted outreach partnerships with STEM-focused high schools, robotics programs, cybersecurity competitions, maritime academies, NJROTC units, middle and high school technology and uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) clubs, and with underserved coastal and inland maritime communities.
- Create a clear, mission-focused value proposition that highlights Sea Year, leadership development, licensing outcomes, and national service opportunities.

Governance, Executive Authority, Financial Controls, and Stakeholder Engagement



Summary: The Academy governance structure remains complex, with overlapping authorities and responsibilities which slow decision-making. While elevation of key issues to DOT leadership has brought about key changes and support for improved HR, information technology and procurement processes, misaligned and antiquated processes persist, and stakeholder engagement has been missing and must be restored. The Superintendent does not have sufficient support or funding to fully execute his senior executive responsibilities for stakeholder engagement and for developing sustainable partnerships and relationships with the maritime industry, although recent DOT support suggests this gap will be addressed. This lack of funding and support severely undermines the Superintendent's ability to carry out required leadership, networking and mission execution duties.

Observations

The elevation of USMMA to DOT's attention has clearly improved outcomes with respect to progress on planning for infrastructure improvements [8]; hiring key leaders; expanding information technology (IT), human resources and procurement services; improving Midshipman quality of life; and pursuing new authorities that will enable USMMA to fund a portion of the infrastructure plan and manage non-appropriated funds for the athletic program and other margin of excellence initiatives at USMMA. Additional work is underway to update and promulgate policies which establish clear responsibilities, decision-making authority, and accountability. The Superintendent does not currently have funding available to support mission-required duties of a chief executive officer in a premier maritime educational institution, although recent DOT activity and DOT's Equal Footing initiative suggest this gap is being addressed. Outreach and engagement by the Superintendent and the Academy are required to meet the Academy's sealift and national security missions, to keep stakeholders apprised, to solicit their feedback, and to connect the Academy to current and future industry and national security needs and trends.

Recommendations














- DOT leadership and the USMMA Superintendent must work together to align and agree on the Superintendent's decision rights, a persistent issue identified in all previous Advisory Board reports [1]. Once agreed, the Superintendent should be vested with the needed authorities.
- The Superintendent's authorities should be expanded, consistent with other Service Academies, to include access to funds for industry engagement, professional development in higher education, and margin of excellence programs (guest speakers, symposia, etc.), which will enhance USMMA's thought leadership in the maritime industry.
- DOT, MARAD and USMMA should finalize and publicize the responsibilities, decision-making authority, and accountability for USMMA, including clarity in Honor Board policies and processes [6, 7]. In developing these policies, there should be a bias to push decision-making authority to the lowest level possible to accelerate momentum.
- DOT should reform the policies and charters for external oversight boards, aligning them where possible to establish parity with other federal service academies.
- USMMA, DOT and MARAD should develop and implement an integrated communication plan to ensure regular and consistent communications to Congress and the maritime industry. If properly resourced and implemented, this outreach will help to restore USMMA as a thought leader in maritime education, research, and mariner development.









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Acknowledgements: The analysis and recommendations in this report are organic to, and the responsibility of, the Advisory Board, in consultation with USMMA, DOT, other maritime and educational institutions, and industry partners and stakeholders. Generative AI tools were used in organizing and editing this report.

Appendix 1

	Category	2025 Recommendation	Comment
	Infrastructure	Monthly reporting on deferred maintenance backlog	New system implemented; Partial progress; midshipmen report response delays.
	Infrastructure	Accelerate 9-year infrastructure plan; open Samuels Hall by Nov 2026	Planning drafted; approvals pending; timeline at risk. Samuels Hall opening 2027 [8].
	Academic Programs	Hire Chief Academic Officer/ Provost by July 2025	Completed.
	Infrastructure	Hire mission-critical faculty and support staff in Marine Engineering and Maritime Transportation	Partial progress; hiring underway but below target.
	Infrastructure	Develop Human Capital Plan and seek HR authorities	Under development; not yet approved by DOT.
	Infrastructure	Complete IT Infrastructure Plan within 90 days	Completed, but implementation is lagging.
	Governance	Clarify Superintendent decision authority for human capital, financial, IT, etc.	Not completed; under development by DOT/MARAD legal team.
	Governance	Clarify Board of Visitors and Advisory Board oversight boards' roles and responsibilities	No significant change; ambiguity persists.
	Governance	Improve financial transparency and monthly reporting	Partial progress; reporting established but unclear.
	Midshipmen Quality of Life	Complete HVAC upgrades and mold elimination abatement.	Partial progress; significant work remains.
	Midshipmen Quality of Life	Restore reliable hot/cold water	Partial progress; inconsistent across barracks.
	Midshipmen Quality of Life	Improve nutrition and food services	Incremental improvements; budget constraints persist.
	Midshipmen Quality of Life	Provide 24/7 email access & campus-wide Wi-Fi	Email access improved; WiFi unreliable. Fiber ring installed.

	Category	2025 Recommendation	Comment
	Midshipmen Quality of Life	Improve Sea Year guidance/ support	Significantly improved but reimbursement confusion remains.
	Academic Programs	Address the Middle States requirements and recommendations from the March 2025 report	Supplemental Interim Report submitted 4.1.26. Implementation underway.
	Academic Programs	Conduct comprehensive curriculum review, developing and leveraging partnerships (USNA, USCGA, NOAA, NRL, APL, NSA) to assist.	Curriculum review planned; not complete. Some partnerships being established; more needed.
	Academic Programs	USMMA should review and make all faculty hiring recommendations.	Hiring authority for faculty has been delegated to USMMA HR Director.
	Academic Programs	Establish external Advisory Boards	Marine Engineering Departmental Advisory Board established; Marine Transportation Departmental Advisory Board under development.
	Academic Programs	Expand research, scholarships, fellowships	Limited progress; remains underfunded.
	Sea Year	Strengthen Sea Year preparation, onboard support, reintegration. Assign dedicated SAPRO for Sea Year	Progress in pre-Sea Year training; onboard Sea Year support inconsistent. Hired SAPRO; program tasking alignment underway; Resources need to be aligned with data documenting midshipmen experiences.
	Midshipmen Quality of Life	USMMA must address gender harassment on campus and during Sea Year. Expand resources to better support members and publicize a clear guide.	EMBARC requirements for USMMA midshipmen clarified; USMMA SAPR and SASH reporting, tracking, and policy changes underway. Uneven SAPR and SASH requirements for state maritime academy (SMA) midshipmen and mariners at sea have not been harmonized, leading to confusion and disconnects during Sea Year and upon graduation. Resources need to be aligned with data documenting midshipmen experiences.

	Category	2025 Recommendation	Comment
●	Midshipmen Quality of Life	Link extracurricular, leadership, ethics, and honor in a cohesive framework. Increase focus for maritime clubs.	Limited progress on improving access to maritime professional development or leadership, ethics and honor program clubs or experiences. No cohesive framework.
●	Sea Year	Increase transparency of midshipmen Sea Year costs; provide midshipmen financial support options	Some transparency improvements, but midshipmen still lack clarity.
●	Admissions	Leverage Student Information System to align recruiting and decision-making timing relative to NCAA rules and peer colleges.	Timeline changes have not yet been incorporated into the admissions process.
●	Communications	Improve discussion of Strategic Sealift mission to internal and external stakeholders.	Partial progress; requires coordinated communication plan.