

2015 Annual Report to the Secretary of Transportation

**Prepared by the U.S. Merchant Marine
Academy Advisory Board**

June 1, 2015

This report provides the U.S. Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) Anthony Foxx with advice and counsel in accordance with the May 2013 appointment requiring the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA, or Academy) Advisory Board (Board) to regularly examine the Academy's course of instruction and management and to advise the Secretary, the Maritime Administration (MARAD) Administrator, and the USMMA Superintendent.

The Board provided an annual report to the Secretary in 2014 resulting in directives from the Secretary to MARAD and the Academy. This report provides a progress update on the 2014 directives and those concerns not addressed in the previous annual report. The findings and recommendations within are based on information the Board obtained over the past 12 months from:

- Discussions with Academy faculty, Midshipmen, staff, alumni, maritime industry commercial and Federal employers, and leadership;
- Inspection of the Academy's facilities and grounds;
- Presentations and reports prepared by faculty and administration for the Board;
- Responses to employee and student surveys; and
- Discussions with the Academy reaccreditation steering committee and sub-committee members who are leading the self-study reaccreditation process.

Table 1 provides a summary of the Secretary's immediate and long-term directives issued after the Board's 2014 Annual Report, along with a summary of the Board's commentary on progress made on these directives. The Secretary's directives fall into three broad categories: 1) improved quality of life, 2) academic experience, and 3) external relations.

Details about progress made on each directive (organized by category) follow Table 1, followed by additional recommendations from the Board.

Table 1. Secretary's Directives for Action and the Board's Assessment of Progress Made

Directive Timeframe (Per the Secretary)	Category	Directive	Summary of Progress
Immediate	Academic Experience	Develop a comprehensive leadership program	Started but stalled
		Encourage faculty to be available to Midshipmen	Improved
	Improved Quality of Life	Upgrade the dining experience for Midshipmen and visitors	Improved; Academy continuing to work with vendor
		Hire an experienced individual to help USMMA leadership promote a positive campus culture and to allocate appropriate funding to improve Midshipmen quality of life	Accomplished: Individual hired and starting in June 2015
Long-Term	Academic Experience	Appoint an industry advisory entity	Planning is underway to accomplish this in by the end of 2015
		Develop a faculty hiring strategy to ensure diverse and qualified faculty	In progress
		Identify policy changes and resources to support greater professional development opportunities for faculty	Partially funded and starting to make progress
		Conduct a comprehensive review of education equipment-in particular, simulators and information technology infrastructure-and investigate the possibility of using private funding	Initial planning is underway
	External Relations	Improve relationships with USMMA alumni by strengthening and expanding communications	Communication is occurring

1. **Academic Experience**

Directive: Develop a Comprehensive Leadership Program

The USMMA's mission is "to educate and graduate licensed merchant mariners and leaders of exemplary character who will serve America's marine transportation and defense needs in peace and war." Therefore the directive to develop a comprehensive leadership program at USMMA is directly in line with the Academy's mission.

Some progress has been made in this area. The Commandant initiated a leadership discussion group in August 2014 that has been well received by Midshipmen. The Commandant will implement a formal leadership assessment program for all Midshipmen in academic year 2015-2016.

A Leadership Course was offered in the 2nd term of 2015 as an elective. It was well received by the Midshipmen and it will be offered as an elective in 2016 in all trimesters.

The Superintendent initiated a Midshipman Leadership Development Program Working Group in August 2014 to assist in formalizing and standardizing the leadership development program at the Academy. After initial progress, the Working Group stalled because members could not reach agreement on the relative weight and priority of the Bachelor of Science Degree curriculum, the U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credentialing training, and the structured experiences to develop leaders of exemplary character in a four year period.

Directive: Establish a Program to Routinely Evaluate Faculty Teaching Methods

The Academy has established a program to routinely evaluate faculty teaching methods, provide faculty support and training for professional development, and encourage faculty to be available to Midshipmen outside of the classroom. Examples of specific improvements in this area include:

- A. Tighter oversight of adherence to office hours. There is evidence that office hour adherence has improved.
- B. More frequent student evaluation of instructors. Beginning with the second trimester in 2015, students will submit course evaluations every trimester (instead of every alternate trimester). This is common practice at institutions of higher education, which typically administer student surveys at the end of every course based on standard evaluation criteria. These data can be collated at departmental, program, and school levels and used for continuous improvement.
- C. Increased in-class observation of non-tenured and tenured faculty. Observation of non-tenured faculty has increased from twice to three times per academic year.

- D. Strengthened new faculty mentoring program. Each new faculty member is now assigned a junior and senior peer mentor.

Directive: Appoint an Industry Advisory Entity

MARAD is working with Academy leadership to identify candidates to serve on an Industry Advisory Entity. Input from members of this Entity should factor into rebalancing the curriculum and Regimental experience to fulfill the Academy's stated mission.

Directive: Develop a Faculty Hiring Strategy

The authority to hire adjunct professors has been delegated by MARAD to the Academy in support of this directive.

Directive: Improve Faculty Professional Development Opportunities

This directive has been partially funded and is underway. More professional development opportunities are being made available to faculty. The Academy now offers peer review and support programs, workshops, and presentations by Master Teachers, webinars, editorials on topics related to teaching effectiveness, and brown bag sessions focused on educational strategy. Faculty are also attending professional and educational programs and conferences. An Academy instructor, Captain George Edenfield, chaired the drafting group for tanker model courses at the International Maritime Organization's Human Element, Training, and Watchkeeping subcommittee meeting in the United Kingdom in February 2015. Additionally, the Academy hosted the nationally recognized Women on the Water Conference on 25-27 March 2015.

Directive: Conduct a Comprehensive Review of Education Equipment

Initial planning is underway to develop a review process of the Academy's education equipment, including the simulators and information technology infrastructure. Funding is provided in the FY16 President's budget for simulators and other educational equipment. Private funding options will also be investigated.

2. Improved Quality of life

Directive: Upgrade the Dining Experience

The dining experience has significantly improved. Continuous monitoring and review of the food services are required to ensure food quantity and quality remains consistent.

Directive: Hire an Experienced Individual to Help USMMA Leadership Promote a Positive Campus Culture

The Academy added a Director of Student Activities position to its budget. The individual hired for this role will start in June 2015. In the meantime, the Regiment has taken on more responsibility for

improving student life. For example, it has offered more trips and development activities that are being embraced by the Midshipmen. The Commandant has solicited ideas from the Midshipmen to improve the quality of life and has approved several. The Midshipmen are appreciative of these changes and are responding well to them. A \$30,000 gift for cultural trips from the USMMA Alumni Association and Foundation (AAF) in December 2014 will also help improve student life.

3. External Relations

Directive: Improve Relationships with USMMA Alumni

The relationships with the AAF Board remain strained. There are regular monthly meetings between the Superintendent and the AAF President. USMMA AAF chapter leaders and members have engaged in conversations with MARAD, USMMA leadership, and Board members. A new Director of External Affairs has been hired and will still start in June. The Superintendent is also holding one town hall meeting each term to speak with Midshipmen, faculty, alumni and other interested parties.

4. Institutional Assessment

Faculty members have expressed strong interest to the Advisory Board for resources to strengthen the Academy's institutional assessment capability in support of making data driven decisions. Their interest in institutional assessment coalesced over the past year as they engaged in a self-examination to gather evidence to demonstrate how well the Academy meets rigorous and comprehensive standards for accreditation that were revised and published by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 2014.¹ This interest aligns well with a recently formed Institutional Effectiveness Council led by the Deputy Superintendent.

Institutional assessment programs are the norm in Higher Education. Typically there is at least one faculty or staff member responsible to regularly and systematically assesses progress toward meeting institutional goals, gather and analyze feedback from all relevant stakeholders, compare itself with established best practices and emerging practices, and work with the faculty and staff to use the feedback to continuously improve. Strong institutional assessment functions require dedicated staff and attention to data and infrastructure issues.

¹ *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards of Accreditation*. 13th ed. Philadelphia, Pa.: Commission, 2014. Print.

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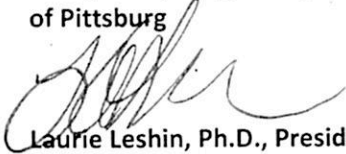
In summary, the Advisory Board recommends the following:

- A. Stay the course and direct the USMMA administration and faculty to carry out the Secretary's immediate and long-term directives as listed in Table 1 that have not been accomplished.
- B. Direct the Academy to conduct a comprehensive review of the academic and Regimental programs in light of the mission and formalize and standardize the leadership development program at the Academy without increasing the academic load on faculty and Midshipmen.
- C. Direct the Superintendent to strengthen the Academy's capability to collect and use data in a meaningful way to support decisions and in accordance with *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and standards of Accreditation*.

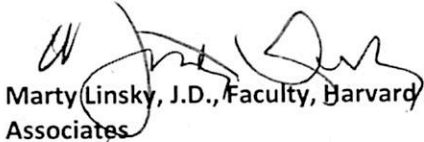
Respectfully Submitted to Secretary Foxx on June 1, 2015 by the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Board of Advisors.



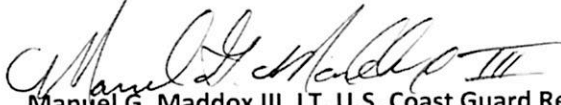
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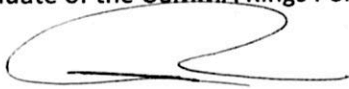
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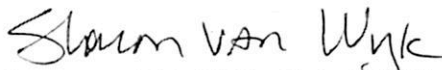
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