

**MEETING OF THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY
BOARD OF VISITORS
Crabtree Room, USMMA
20 November 2015**

ATTENDEES

BOARD OF VISITORS MEMBERS: Senator Deb Fisher

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF: Staff representing Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS), Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE), Rep. Peter King (R-NY) and Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)

Maritime Administration/Department of Transportation (MARAD/DOT) OFFICIALS: Deputy Administrator Michael Rodriguez; Rear Admiral James Helis, U.S. Maritime Service, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Superintendent; Mr. Brian Blower, MARAD Academy Liaison and Board of Visitors Designated Federal Officer; and Ms. Angela Stroschein, MARAD Office of Congressional and Public Affairs

PURPOSE

As required in law, the Board of Visitors (BOV) met to receive a briefing on the state of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (“USMMA” or “Academy”) and to hear the findings in the July 1, 2015 report to the Secretary by Academy’s Advisory Board.

Maritime Administrator Jaenichen commenced the meeting at 10:05 a.m. with welcoming remarks and introductions of the BOV members, MARAD and Academy representatives in attendance.

SUPERINTENDENT’S BRIEFING

Superintendent Helis provided briefings on the state of the Academy, statistics for the incoming USMMA Class of 2019, upcoming calendar events, and the ongoing academic re-accreditation process, including progress made on the Academy’s “self-study” report and the timeline for upcoming milestones. He then provided an overview of completed critical infrastructure projects, the status of “Zero Deck” renovations in the Midshipmen Barracks, the plans for renovations to the main academic buildings and the completion of the Academy Space Utilization Study.

Superintendent Helis then provided an update on the 2013-2014 Academic Year Biennial Survey and Report on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault noting that the final report is currently in the clearance process at MARAD and DOT Transportation. He pointed out that there are no significant changes from the interim report that was submitted to Congress in January 2015.

Improved Quality of Life

In the 2014 Advisory Board Report to the Secretary, the Advisory Board discussed the insufficient quality and availability of food for the Midshipmen. Over the last year, the dining experience has improved significantly and the Commandant’s staff continuously monitors and reviews food services to ensure food quantity and quality remains consistent.

A Director of Student Activities has been funded and hired at the Academy and morale in the Regiment has improved significantly already.

SUMMARY

QUESTIONS

Senator Wicker's staff asked a question about the leadership recommendations of the Advisory Board and how they would be implemented. Dr. van Wyk pointed out that the recommendations are not intended to change the curriculum, but rather to fill existing gaps. Superintendent Helis added that he has directed the Academic Dean to make room in the existing curriculum without adding to the course load. He noted that the leadership course is being offered as an elective this school year, but will become part of the curriculum beginning in 2016.

MR. PENNELLA'S COMMENTS

Mr. Pennella noted that USMMA is a vital source of mariners for Crowley Maritime and it must remain successful in its mission and stay relevant. He stated that he is honored to serve on the Advisory Board, but he would like to see the gap closed between the Academy and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association and Foundation. Mr. Pennella noted the shared goals of all Academy stakeholders.

MR. THAYER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Thayer echoed Mr. Pennella's comments regarding the need for the Academy to continue to produce quality licensed mariners as the Military Sealift Command (MSC) is highly dependent on competent mariners to accomplish its mission. Administrator Jaenichen noted that MSC is the largest single employer of Academy graduates and MSC offered approximately 60 seagoing positions in 2015.

CAPTAIN MARTIN'S COMMENTS

Captain Martin noted that the U.S. Coast Guard Academy has an existing leadership program that they would be happy to share with USMMA and she encouraged everyone to visit the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Deputy Administrator Rodriguez pointed out that nearly 100 percent of graduates go on active duty or in the Reserve component of the Armed Forces and he mentioned that the U.S. Navy Reserve's Strategic Sealift Officer program was recently highlighted in The Navy Reservist magazine. He went on to say that as a USMMA graduate, he is appreciative of the work done by the Advisory Board and their service to MARAD, the Academy and the Nation.

CLOSING REMARKS

Administrator Jaenichen thanked the Advisory Board for their dedication and hard work over the last year.

There being no further questions or discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1140.

Submitted by:
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