

**Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of**

United States Merchant Marine Academy
300 Steamboat Road
Kings Point, New York 11024

**by
A Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

Prepared After a
Small Team Visit to the Institution on:
September 21-22, 2017

The Visitors:

Ms. Mary Jane Brukardt
Special Assistant to the Chancellor,
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Dr. Andrew Phillips
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United States Naval Academy, Team Chair

Working with the Visitors:
Dr. Idna M. Corbett
Vice President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

At the Time of the Visit:

President/Chief Executive Officer:
Rear Admiral James Helis
Superintendent, United States Merchant Marine Academy

Chief Academic Officer:
Captain Preston De Jean
Interim Academic Dean, United States Merchant Marine Academy

Chair of the Advisory Board:
Currently Vacant
Chair, Advisory Board, United States Merchant Marine Academy

Maritime Administrator:
RADM Mark Buzby
United States Maritime Administration

I. Institutional Overview

The United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) is one of the five Federal Service Academies. Its roots lie in the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, where Congress authorized a Federal merchant marine cadet program to educate mariners who would serve the economic and strategic needs of the Nation. In 1947, USMMA began granting four-year Bachelor of Science degrees; in 1956, Congress made the Academy permanent. The Maritime Administration (MARAD) of the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) operates the Academy. The current mission statement of the USMMA is as follows:

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.

Academy graduates earn baccalaureate degrees, U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Marine Credentials (commonly referred to as "license") as Deck or Engineering Officers, and accept a commission, if offered, in the U.S. Navy Reserve or another uniformed service. On average, roughly 70 percent of graduates sail as merchant mariners each year, with about 25 percent choosing the military option, and five percent entering other approved maritime-related careers. Alumni serve in leadership positions across every segment of the U.S. maritime industry, in all branches of the military, in numerous government agencies, and in the private sector.

Four fundamental pillars constitute the USMMA educational experience: Academics, Regiment, Physical Fitness, and Sea Year. During Sea Year, a mandated experiential learning component, each student ("midshipman") works and learns on board merchant ships or approved military or other federal government vessels for 300 to 330 days, depending on his/her academic major. As a result, the USMMA academic year is 11 months, with 40 instructional weeks; this academic calendar enables midshipmen to meet graduation requirements in four years. Once enrolled, all midshipmen are therefore engaged in the USMMA experience year-round, whether through Sea Year, regimental obligations, required internships, or, for some, summer school.

The academic majors presently offered by the Academy are housed in two departments: Marine Transportation (MT) and Marine Engineering (ME). The five majors offered are: Marine Transportation, Maritime Logistics and Security, Marine Engineering, Marine Engineering Systems, and Marine Engineering and Shipyard Management.

Maritime education and training programs must comply with the globally adopted Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW). These standards are promulgated by the

International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency responsible for maritime safety and pollution prevention. Institutional compliance with these standards is monitored through internal vetting as well as through external review by MARAD, DOT, and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). Accordingly, USMMA continually assesses its maritime education curriculum and makes changes in order to maintain a robust licensing program in compliance with any modifications or changes in national and international maritime education standards.

II. Nature and Conduct of the Visit

On 23 June 2016, as a result of its evaluation of the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) warned the institution that its accreditation was in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution was in compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 7, and Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9.

Following submission of a monitoring report and a small team visit, on 22 June 2017 the Commission continued to warn the institution, citing insufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 2 and Requirement of Affiliation 7. That June 2017 MSCHE final report to the Merchant Marine Academy cited one Requirement with respect to Standard 2 and its closely associated Requirement of Affiliation 7:

1. The institution must (a) demonstrate resource allocation decisions that are directly linked to mission and goal achievement at the institutional and unit level, and (b) document further development and implementation of an organized and sustained institutional assessment process, including evidence that assessment results are used to inform decision-making.

A follow-up visit was conducted on 21-22 September 2017, to monitor progress and to evaluate compliance with Standard 2 and Requirement of Affiliation 7.

Individuals met/interviewed during the team visit:

Core Planning Team: Dr. Lori Townsend, Ms. Jamie Cocheo, Mr. John Demers, LT David Taliaferro, LCDR Mike Huzyak, CAPT Ann Sanborn, MIDN Caleb Bradberry, Coach Mike Toop, CDR Drew McCarthy

Strategic Planning Consultants: Bill Scott, Christine Whitney-Sanchez

Sponsorship Team: RADM Jim Helis, CAPT Mike Stroud, CAPT Preston De Jean, Ms. Maureen White, Dr. Marvin Williams, Ms. Michelle Underwood, CDR Mike Bedryk, Dr. Lori Townsend, Mr. David Socolof, Ms. Kelly Butruch

Institutional Assessment: RDML Sue Dunlap, Dr. Lori Townsend, Ms. Jamie Cocheo, CAPT Preston De Jean, Coach Tom Gill, CDR Brad Hawksworth, Dr. Susan Comilang, CAPT Jon Helmick, Dr. Gabe Colef, LT David Taliaferro, Mr. Rick Sager, Dr. Anne Lundquist

Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee: Mr. John Demers, CAPT Preston De Jean, CAPT Mike Stroud, Mr. David Socolof, Ms. Maureen White

Resource Allocation: RDML Sue Dunlap, Mr. David Socolof, Mr. John Demers, CAPT Mike Stroud, CAPT Preston De Jean, CDR Drew McCarthy, Ms. Maureen White, Dr. Lori Townsend, Ms. Jamie Cocheo

III. Affirmation of Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation Under Review

Based on a review of the monitoring report and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution now satisfies the Requirements of Affiliation, including specifically Requirement of Affiliation 7.

IV. Commendations and Summary of Institutional Strengths

The Merchant Marine Academy is to be commended for the significant effort devoted to responding to the Middles States concerns, and for the many accomplishments implemented in the relatively short time-frame spanning only three months. It is apparent that the Merchant Marine Academy again has come together as a team in response to the requirements for action; that team includes Academy leaders, faculty, staff, students, and MARAD officials, all working together for the common purpose of improving the Merchant Marine Academy. Most notably, the senior leadership team at the Academy, including specifically the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent, the Executive Officer, the Commandant, the Academic Dean, the Chief Financial Officer, and the Director of Institutional Assessment, have shown exemplary leadership in the effort to improve the Academy and resolve all outstanding issues.

It is also clear that the progress to date could not have been realized without the dedication and hard work of many faculty, staff, and students who have worked in teams - both with each other and with senior Academy leaders – for the betterment of the institution. All members of the Merchant Marine Academy should take pride in all that they have accomplished in a very short period of time. There is no doubt that this team effort has made the Academy a better institution and placed it on a good trajectory for the future, and that all members of the Academy are to be commended for their contribution to that effort.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards Under Review

Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Renewal)

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with Standard 2.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

At the time of this visit, the Merchant Marine Academy demonstrated institutional level goals and objectives based on a strategic plan placed into effect in 2012. The May 2017 Superintendent's

Annual Guidance Memorandum articulates institutional priorities consistent with that existing strategic plan, and serves as the foundation for the existing processes for resource allocation that aligns with mission and goal achievement. In addition, the institution has adopted the new Core Values of honor, respect, and service. These are widely supported and communicated, led primarily by midshipmen. Recently, a new strategic planning process has commenced, and is designed to create a new 2018-2023 strategic plan based on an Appreciative Inquiry model.

Progress has been made on both strategic planning and institutional assessment. In particular, the new Strategy, Execution, and Assessment (SEA) process has instituted a systematic process for linking planning to resource allocation decisions. In addition, the creation of a new institutional assessment framework is expected to be effective for linking planning, resource allocation, and renewal at all levels. Although some institutional assessment data is used to inform the SEA process, this aspect of the assessment process is still in a formative stage.

In support of these findings, evidence cited in the monitoring report as well as that revealed during the on-site visit includes the following:

- The Superintendent's May 11, 2017, Annual Guidance Memorandum currently serves as the day to day operational strategic plan, outlining institutional strategic priorities, in alignment with the existing 2012-2017 plan.
- Superintendent Instruction 2017-07 (Institutional Effectiveness) issued in August, 2017, governs planning and resource allocation decisions, and directs them to be aligned with mission and goals.
- A new strategic planning process (for a 2018-2023 plan) – based on the Appreciative Inquiry model – was initiated in June 2017. Consultants from IPI Southwest were contracted to support the effort with the first on-campus meeting held on Aug 2-3, 2017. Additional training was provided on Aug 31-Sept 1 and Sept 5-6.
- The USMMA Office of Institutional Assessment assembled a Core Planning Team (CPT) to lead the planning process. The CPT has mapped an effective pathway for engaging the campus productively in the development of a transformative strategic plan. This process is still in its formative stages.
- The CPT is engaging stakeholders broadly, with 400-600 interviews planned in the next several months. A Summit involving 200 stakeholders will be held in March and lead to the development of the strategic plan, with specific goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- USMMA and MARAD strategic plans are to be aligned; MARAD Goal 6.4 specifically directs MARAD to support the USMMA strategic planning process and to help ensure alignment with DOT objectives.
- Superintendent Instruction 2017-06 (Academy Core Values) issued in August, 2017, formally identifies three new USMMA Core Values, based on recommendations of the LMI Culture Audit. A range of communication strategies and activities in support of the Core Values are implemented, led by midshipmen.
- A Human Capital Inventory was conducted to inform a new Human Capital Plan. This plan is in process, but not yet complete.
- USMMA and MARAD selected three KPIs to guide the budget justification process: (1) number of graduates each year, (2) first-time license pass rates for Marine Engineering majors,

and (3) first-time pass rates for Marine Transportation majors. These KPIs should inform the Enrollment Management Plan, which is not yet complete.

- Creation of a Midshipman Data Set in the Office of Institutional Assessment is under development. This is predicted to be useful in guiding recruitment, retention and student success decisions. The data set is still being developed, and is not yet complete.
- A Technology Strategic Plan is to be developed to provide a stable, robust modern IT experience for all at USMMA. This plan is in process and not yet complete.
- New IT software support – Campus Labs Platform for Institutional Effectiveness – was procured and installed in July, 2017, to support assessment and budgeting across units and the institution. This software is still in the implementation phase, and not yet in use.
- A Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee has been formed, has continued course level assessment, and is working on a process for program and institutional level outcomes assessment. This process is not yet complete.
- The Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee is now formed and is set to meet in September, 2017, to support the rollout of assessment and institutional effectiveness processes.
- There are three draft Institutional Learning Outcomes: Professional Expertise, Leadership, and Communication. Although these have not formally been adopted, the General Education Committee and the Leadership Program Committee have mapped program learning outcomes to these Institutional Learning Outcomes. During the visit, the potential for additional institutional learning outcomes was discussed, but these have yet to be defined.
- Documentation of examples of institutional assessment pertaining to the three draft outcomes was not included in the monitoring report, but during the visit – and with prompting – sufficient examples were provided for all three. This suggests an institutional need to improve its culture for documenting and sharing evidence.
- USMMA re-engineered its budget process; a zero-based review of resource requirements by all departments was conducted and a new Strategy Execution and Assessment (SEA) process for planning and integration was issued via Superintendent Instruction 2017-08, (Strategy Execution and Assessment Process).
- The August 10, 2017, Superintendent Instruction 2017-05 (Academy Financial Working Group) re-energized the Financial Working Group to review and recommend spending priorities based on the group's assessment of campus needs and institutional priorities.
- The SEA process was used to develop a budget for FY18. The Financial Working Group coordinated funding recommendations, based on the priorities issued in the Superintendent's USMMA Annual Guidance Memorandum, a document that provides strategic direction in the near term while the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan is under development.
- For FY19 the SEA process is being used again to align budget priorities with the priorities outlined in the Annual Guidance Memorandum. Future years will also incorporate the Strategic Plan direction into the SEA process.
- Documentation of examples of SEA processes supporting resource allocation decisions was limited in the monitoring report, but during the visit – and with prompting – sufficient examples were provided. Again, this suggests an institutional need to improve its culture for documenting and sharing evidence.
- During the visit, numerous committee members suggested that the new planning, assessment, and resource allocation processes were beginning to change the campus culture by encouraging institutional transparency and engaging many faculty, staff, and midshipmen. They also suggested this change was still in its infancy, and several vocal critics have yet to be converted.

Requirements:

None.

Recommendations:

1. The institution should complete the new strategic plan, following the timeline as presented by the institution. The institution should include key performance metrics that will be used to inform resource allocation decisions that link directly to mission and goal achievement. The institution should document how planning, assessment and budgeting processes will be integrated and include timelines for key actions and decision points at the institutional and departmental levels.
2. The institution should complete all proposed and any subsequent supporting plans (human capital, information technology, enrollment, etc.), and establish and adhere to a timeline for their implementation in alignment with the new strategic plan.
3. The institution should formally adopt the existing draft institutional learning outcomes (professional expertise, leadership, communication), and bring to a timely conclusion the development and adoption of any additional institutional learning outcomes desired by the institution.
4. The institution should implement the proposed new institutional assessment process as outlined in Appendix L of the Monitoring Report, following the timeline as presented by the institution. The institution should document existing and future assessment practices and describe how the assessment results are formally used in the planning and resource allocation processes.
5. The institution should continue the progress made in applying, documenting, and communicating the Strategy, Execution and Assessment (SEA) process that links resource allocation decisions with mission and goal achievement.
6. The institution should continue to support institutional transparency and engagement by enhancing campus communication regarding the integration of assessment, planning, and resource allocation decisions.

Suggestions:

None.

VI. Summary of Compliance

Based on a review of the monitoring report and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the team draws the following conclusions.

The team affirms that the institution now satisfies Requirement of Affiliation 7 and Standard 2.

The team's overall evaluation is that USMMA remains an institution that is fully dedicated to successfully carrying out its mission to educate and develop leaders to serve in the global maritime environment. USMMA was most cooperative making faculty, staff, and students available for meetings with the team. When the team requested information not in the Monitoring Report, USMMA leaders were quick to comply. We offer the ideas contained in this report in the spirit of collegiality and peer review.