

Monitoring Report to the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

from the

UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY
Kings Point, NY 11024

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Subject of the Monitoring Report:

“To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently 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). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due March 1, 2017, documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 7 and Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9, including but not limited to evidence of (1) institutional planning that (a) integrates plans for academic, personnel, information resources and technologies, learning resources, and financial development; (b) includes goals and objectives, both institution-wide and for all individual units, that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, are linked to mission and goal achievement, and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels; and (c) includes planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results (Requirement of Affiliation 7 and Standard 2); (2) resource allocation procedures that include (a) strategies to measure and assess the level of, and efficient utilization of, institutional resources required to support the institution’s mission and goals; (b) rational and consistent policies and procedures in place to determine allocation of assets; (c) a financial planning and budgeting process that provides for an annual budget and multi-year budget projections, both institution-wide and among departments; utilizes planning and assessment documents; and addresses resource acquisition and allocation for the institution; and (d) adequate institutional controls to deal with financial, administrative and auxiliary operations (Standard 3); (3) a governance structure that includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure

institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution (Standard 4); (4) an administration characterized by (a) a chief executive whose primary responsibility is to lead the institution toward the achievement of its goals and with responsibility for administration of the institution; (b) administrative leaders with appropriate skills, degrees and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions; (c) qualified staffing appropriate to the goals, type, size, and complexity of the institution; and (d) adequate information and decision-making systems to support the work of administrative leaders (Standard 5); and (5) steps taken to build a climate of mutual trust and respect on campus and during the Sea Year (Standard 9). To further request that the monitoring report also document (6) further development and implementation of an organized and sustained institutional assessment process, including evidence that assessment results are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and used in planning, resource allocation, and renewal at all levels (Standard 7). A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison guidance visit to discuss the Commission's expectations. The date of the next accreditation review will be established when accreditation is reaffirmed."

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SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE BY STANDARD

On 23 June 2016, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education warned the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA or Academy) that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 7 and Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9. Additionally, the Commission requested further development and implementation of an organized and sustained institutional assessment process. This section of the report outlines the requirements as stated in the Visiting Team's Report and a brief summary of the actions taken to restore compliance with the Standards.

Requirement of Affiliation 7 – Institutional Planning

Standard 7 – Institutional Assessment

Standard 2 – Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

Requirements:

Institutional planning integrates plans for academic, personnel, information resources and technologies, learning resources, and financial development.

The institution must demonstrate resource allocation decisions that are directly linked to mission and goal achievement at the institutional and unit level, including Human Resources, Financial, and Procurement.

Actions Taken:

In early 2017, the Academy began the planning process for developing its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. To support this process in the institution's unique organizational context, the Academy will use an Appreciative Inquiry framework. Appreciative Inquiry is a particular way of asking questions and envisioning the future that fosters positive relationships and builds on the basic goodness in people and the organization. This methodology will help the Academy community create a shared vision for advancing the institution's mission, which has been a recurring challenge, in part because of its varying identities. Appreciative Inquiry offers a fresh approach to traditional strategic planning processes. Using this highly collaborative process involving all constituents, the Academy community will reaffirm and refine the Academy's Core Values, create a shared vision for the Academy's future, and identify strategic goals with strategies to achieve them. From the Academy's new Strategic Plan, departments will create aligning plans with departmental goals and performance measures that will help the Academy achieve its strategic goals. The departmental plans will address personnel, information resources and technologies, learning resources and other resources necessary to achieve their goals. Not only will the resulting strategic plan be actionable, but the process will also build organizational capacity and personal ownership for the Plan.

The Academy is working diligently to solidify an institution-wide assessment process that is systematic, organized, and sustainable and that clearly identifies progress on strategic goal attainment through the development of performance measures that are "clearly and purposefully related to the goals they are assessing so they can inform institutional decisions." The Academy adopted a new Assessment Framework and is working to align newly developed

Institutional Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes with Course and Co-curricular Learning Outcomes and develop tools for assessing the outcomes. The Office of Institutional Assessment will develop a new Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) in parallel with the Academy's Strategic Plan to articulate exactly how the Academy will evaluate the success of the Strategic Plan. In addition, to support institutional planning and continuous improvement efforts across the institution, the Office of Institutional Assessment recognized the need for an integrated, multi-module software platform to facilitate sustainable planning, assessment, and institutional effectiveness processes. The Academy selected a product that it intends to procure and implement in the current fiscal year, contingent on funding levels after the end of the current Continuing Resolution on 28 April 2017. This software platform will facilitate the dissemination of assessment data across the Academy to enhance data-driven decision-making. Assessment data will then be used in planning, resource allocation, and renewal at all levels.

The Office of Academy Financial Management (OAFM) implemented procedures to improve the Academy's accounting and financial management processes. In addition, OAFM adopted a Strategy, Execution, and Assessment (SEA) process to guide each fiscal year planning cycle. This process will ensure that spending aligns with the Academy's strategic goals and that the budget is executed accordingly. An end of year review will assess whether strategic goals were achieved consistent with the resource allocation decisions. If not, spend plans for the next fiscal year will be adjusted accordingly. DOT also upgraded its information technology systems to integrate purchasing, financial management, and reporting systems. This will facilitate collection of data and its analysis, leading to more real time decision-making for spending.

Standard 3 — Institutional Resources

Requirements:

The institution does not have access to its approved annual budget in a manner that supports the effective, efficient, and timely use of financial resources at the institution level. The Secretary of Transportation must initiate and lead an effort to ensure statutory and regulatory changes are made by Congress so that the annual budget is available to the institution at the start of the fiscal year.

The Superintendent does not currently have direct control over the hiring process for faculty and staff. The Superintendent must have the authority and responsibility, assigned or delegated from DOT and/or MARAD as appropriate, to ensure adequate faculty, staff, and administration to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations.

Actions Taken:

On 19 December 2016, Secretary Anthony R. Foxx sent a formal memorandum to both the U. S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives requesting that the Committee on Appropriations remove the allotment and funding restriction provisions within the Maritime Administration's Operations and Training account as proposed in the FY 2017 Appropriations Bill (S. 2844). The proviso restricting the release of 50 percent of the Academy's funding until a spend plan is

submitted was removed from the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017, which is a Continuing Resolution (CR) providing continuing appropriations through 28 April 2017. The Act became Public Law 114-254 on 12 December 2016. The OAFM Director and the CFO of the Maritime Administration (MARAD) will continue to monitor Congressional action on future appropriations bills to ensure removal of the language preventing the Superintendent from being the allotment holder for Academy funds.

On 7 February 2017, RADM James A. Helis sent a formal memorandum to Mr. Joel Szabat, MARAD Executive Director serving in lieu of the Maritime Administrator, requesting changes to Maritime Administrative Order (MAO) 150-1 and 710-181-0-A3. Changes to MAO 150-1 would assign direct reporting authority for the Office of Human Resources to the Academy's Executive Officer, with concurrent reporting responsibility to the MARAD Director, Office of Human Resources. Changes to MAO 710-181-0-A3 would delegate authority for the administration of the Excepted Service Appointment Program (faculty appointments) to the Superintendent vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources. The requested changes are under consideration by the Executive Director.

Standard 4 — Leadership and Governance

Requirement:

The Superintendent does not currently have direct control over the institutional functions of personnel hiring, financial planning and management, and procurement. The Superintendent must have the means, authority, and responsibility, assigned or delegated from DOT and/or MARAD as appropriate, over the institutional functions of personnel hiring, financial planning and management, and procurement required to effectively and efficiently accomplish the Academy's mission.

Actions Taken:

The Academy implemented a new governing board with clearly defined roles in policy development and decision-making. MARAD chartered the Maritime Education and Training Executive Review Board (METERB), which has decision authority and fiduciary responsibility, assures institutional integrity, advocates for resource development, and provides strategic guidance consistent with the Academy's mission.

On 7 February 2017, RADM James A. Helis sent a formal memorandum to Mr. Joel Szabat, Executive Director serving in lieu of the Maritime Administrator, requesting changes to Maritime Administrative Order (MAO) 150-1 and 710-181-0-A3. Changes to MAO 150-1 would return would direct reporting authority for the Office of Human Resources and Office of Procurement to the Academy's Executive Officer, with concurrent reporting responsibility to the MARAD Director, Office of Human Resources, and MARAD Director, Office of Acquisition, respectively. It would also return direct reporting authority for the Office of Academy Financial Management to the Superintendent, with concurrent reporting responsibility to the MARAD Associate Administrator for Budget and Programs/Chief Financial Officer. Changes to MAO 710-181-0-A3 would delegate authority for the administration of faculty hiring under the

Excepted Service Appointment Program to the Superintendent vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources. The requested changes are under consideration by the Executive Director.

Standard 5 — Administration

Requirement:

The Director of Institutional Assessment, Director of Admissions, Academic Dean, Chief Financial Officer, Human Resources Officer, and other key administrator positions are all currently vacant or occupied by interim staff. While some of these positions, such as the Academic Dean, are filled on an interim basis with highly qualified, skilled and dedicated individuals, the Academy must move forward with permanently filling these critical positions with administrative leaders who possess the appropriate skills, credentials, and training.

Actions Taken:

The Academy filled key leadership positions in 2016. The Academy hired a Director of Institutional Assessment, a Director of Admissions, and a Director for the Office of Academy Financial Management (equivalent of Chief Financial Officer). A review of the Academy's administrative structure lead to the addition of an Executive Officer position in the Superintendent's Office. The Executive Officer began employment on 9 January 2017.

Despite the Presidential hiring freeze imposed in January 2017, the Secretary of Transportation approved eight USMMA positions as exempt from the freeze under the public safety and national security exceptions to the freeze, and the Academy is moving to fill the positions immediately. The positions include the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) Program Manager/Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) (ready to advertise), two SARC Assistants (one ready to advertise, one tentative offer accepted), Academic Dean (posted), Commandant of Midshipmen (posted), Equal Employment Opportunity/Diversity Officer (ready to advertise), Instructor-Electrical Engineer (posted), and Marine Transportation Professor (employee commenced employment on 21 February 2017). Although some key administrative, regimental and academic positions do not have permanent employees, the Academy is still able to perform its mission due to the high quality of interim and acting appointees in those positions. The expertise of interim and acting appointees, along with their dedication and determination to serve the Midshipmen, enables the Academy to continue delivering an exceptional education and support services to the Midshipmen.

Standard 9 — Student Support Services

Requirements:

To improve the safety and climate of respect that all Midshipmen encounter during the Sea Year experience, the institution must take demonstrable steps in preparation for and upon return from the Sea Year experience.

The pervasiveness of sexual harassment on campus must be addressed as a pressing and substantial concern that has fostered a hostile environment for many cohorts of Midshipmen.

The institution must implement specific steps to build a climate of mutual respect and trust among Midshipmen, faculty, and staff with respect to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Actions Taken:

In June 2016, then-Secretary Foxx directed a Sea Year Stand Down in response to reported incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH), hazing, bullying, coercion, and retaliation involving Midshipmen during their time at sea. MARAD established the Shipboard Climate Compliance Team (SCCT) to develop and implement a company-by-company review process to determine if those companies had policies in place by which would make them eligible for carrying USMMA Midshipmen aboard their ships.

In August 2016, Secretary Foxx decided that additional steps had to be taken to ensure the safety of our Midshipmen at sea and on campus, and to promote a culture of transparency and respect for everyone, so he ordered an independent cultural assessment of the Academy. In October 2016, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) hired Logistics Management Institute (LMI) to perform the culture audit in order to address the root causes of the sexual assault, sexual harassment and other inappropriate behaviors that have persisted over the years both on campus and during Sea Year.

In September 2016, the Academy contracted with EverFi for online interactive training in both SASH and alcohol abuse prevention.

In November 2016, the Academy delivered its first Reintegration Program workshop for Midshipmen returning from sea. These workshops provide Midshipmen with the opportunity to develop, share, and tell their stories as a means of debriefing from their at-sea experience. The Academy provided additional workshops in December, 2016 and the next workshops are scheduled for mid-March 2017.

In December 2016, LMI delivered its *Final Report*, including a *Culture Change Action Plan*. An interdepartmental committee, including faculty, staff and Midshipmen, is developing a campaign to influence the Academy's culture in a positive way. This campaign will develop and facilitate a campus-wide discussion of Academy Core Values resulting in a unified USMMA community. The vision for the Culture Campaign is to create and maintain a culture at the Academy that embodies its Core Values and unites the campus community with a shared vision.

As recommended by LMI, the Academy developed a comprehensive and integrated Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Framework, which outlines the Academy's strategic approach to sexual assault prevention and response. This more robust, multi-year strategy establishes strategic goals and objectives, identifies stakeholders, and specifies steps necessary to develop key messages, engagement, communication and training strategies, metrics, and action plans.

The Academy expanded the one-person SARC office to a four person Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) that is responsible for overall program management and integration of the program across all Academy stakeholders. The Academy will hire a SAPRO Program Manager/SARC (ready to advertise), who will provide strategic planning, oversight,

and daily management of all SAPRO programs. The office will have two Victim Advocate/Prevention Educator positions (one ready to advertise, one tentative offer accepted) and a Sea Year Coordinator (on board).

On 15 February 2017, MARAD and the Superintendent announced that the first three commercial shipping companies were deemed Sea Year-eligible, as recommended by the SCCT. The Academy began work immediately to return Midshipmen to sea aboard these vessels, with the first boarding a commercial vessel on 23 February. Since then, a fourth commercial shipping company has been deemed Sea Year-eligible.

INTRODUCTION

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, wherein Congress authorized a federal merchant marine cadet program to educate mariners who would serve the economic and strategic needs of the Nation. In 1947, the Academy began granting four-year Bachelor of Science degrees; in 1956, Congress made the Academy permanent. The Maritime Administration (MARAD), an agency of the United States Department of Transportation (DOT), operates the Academy. The current mission statement of 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 a baccalaureate degree, a U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Marine Credential (license) as a Deck or Engineering Officer, and accept a commission in the U.S. Navy Reserve or another uniformed service. On average, 70 percent of graduates sail as merchant mariners each year, 25 percent choose active duty, and five percent enter other MARAD-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.

The USMMA educational experience is composed of four fundamental pillars: Academics, Regiment, Physical Fitness, and Sea Year. During Sea Year, an experiential learning component of the curriculum, each Midshipman works and learns on board merchant ships or military and other Federal Government vessels for 300 to 330 days, depending on his or her academic major. As a result, the academic year is 11 months with 40 instructional weeks, which allows Midshipmen to meet graduation requirements in four years. Midshipmen are engaged in the USMMA experience year-round, whether through Sea Year, regimental obligations, required internships, or for some, summer school.

The Academy offers five majors within two academic departments. The Department of Marine Transportation (MT) offers degrees in Marine Transportation and Maritime Logistics and Security. The Department of Marine Engineering (ME) offers degrees in Marine Engineering, Marine Engineering Systems, and Marine Engineering and Shipyard Management.

In 2009, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report that identified pervasive internal control deficiencies that resulted in 47 recommendations for corrective action. Consequently, MARAD changed the Maritime Administrative Order (MAO) that describes the organization and authorities of the Academy to assume control over financial management, human resources, and procurement functions. To date, the Academy has fully implemented all 47 GAO recommendations and adequate internal controls are in place. Therefore, in 2016, DOT, MARAD, and the Academy initiated actions necessary to restore the Academy's authority and responsibility over institutional functions and to reinstate appropriate and timely access to its financial resources in order to efficiently and effectively accomplish the Academy's mission.

STANDARD 4 – LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

In order to better satisfy Standard 4, the Academy formalized one of its key internal governing bodies; MARAD chartered a new governing body to provide oversight, strategic direction, and advocacy for the Academy; and the Faculty Forum is moving to enhance its role in shared governance with a new senate model. In addition, the Superintendent requested that MARAD return direct reporting authority over the Office of Academy Financial Management, Office of Human Resources, and Office of Procurement to the Academy.

The Academy's Governance System

The Academy is operated by MARAD—one of the modal agencies of DOT. The day-to-day management of the institution is the responsibility of the Superintendent (equivalent to the title of "college president"), who manages the Academy's leadership team. Together, these individuals comprise the Academy's senior staff, who supervise capable personnel in the daily operation of the institution. All staff receive management guidance through strategic plans, policy statements, instructions, laws and regulations promulgated by the Academy, MARAD and DOT. The Academy's shared governance model includes three key decision- and policy-making bodies, recommending action and providing guidance to the Superintendent. These are the Superintendent's Management Council (being formalized as the Superintendent's Cabinet), the Academic Board, and the Faculty Forum. In addition to its internal governance structure, the Academy has three advisory boards that serve to advise the Superintendent, the Maritime Administrator, the Secretary of Transportation, and Congress. These external boards are the Advisory Board, the Board of Visitors (BOV), and the Maritime Education and Training Executive Review Board (METERB).

Superintendent's Management Council – As recommended in the Self-Study, Academy leadership set out to formalize the Superintendent's Management Council (SMC), a body of senior leaders that advise the Superintendent on Academy matters. During this process, the SMC agreed to revise the title as it defined the role of the group and created a draft Superintendent Instruction (SI) formalizing the Superintendent's Cabinet. The role of the Cabinet is to provide advice and guidance to the Superintendent on all Academy matters, strategic and operational. It serves as a forum to build and align Academy leadership through high-level coordination, collaboration and engagement. A working draft of the SI is located in Appendix A.

Academic Board – The Academic Board is comprised of department heads in the Academic Division and other department heads who are key to successful operation of academic and academic support programs. The Academic Board advises the Academic Dean, who in turn makes recommendations to the Superintendent, regarding academic policy and procedures.

Faculty Forum – In order to invigorate faculty governance as suggested by Middle States, the Faculty Forum appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to report to the Forum president with a detailed proposal to revamp the Forum into a proactive body that takes greater responsibility for academic matters that lie outside of personnel issues. The purpose of this new Faculty

Forum is to support the mission of USMMA by communicating faculty concerns and recommendations to the Superintendent, Academic Dean, Commandant, and Executive Officer.

Since September 2016, the committee has been meeting for up to four hours per week, and anticipates a report to the Faculty Forum in March 2017. A period of debate within the current Forum will follow. The Faculty Forum leadership intends to have this more robust Faculty Forum up and running on the first day of classes in AY2017-2018.

Key changes proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee include:

- The creation of a Senate, which will be the deliberative and voting body on almost all issues brought before the Forum. The Senate will listen to arguments put forth at monthly Forum meetings and convene within five business days to deliberate and vote on motions brought forth.
- A requirement for committee chairs to give monthly reports to the Forum president, who will make them available to the general membership.
- Assisted by the Executive Committee, the president will charge committees with a steady load of inquiries and report writing for the submission to the general Forum membership. The president shall oversee the operations and administration of the Faculty Forum, and act as a conduit to facilitate direct communication between the Forum's membership and the Academy's senior leadership.
- The president will be responsible for providing the membership with a monthly report that includes the minutes of past meetings, the agenda for forthcoming meetings, reports of committee chairs, and other relevant communications.

The reformed Forum will take a proactive approach that empowers the faculty to contribute more effectively in academic policies, concerns, and issues, and therefore, play a more significant role in shared governance of the Academy.

Advisory Board— The USMMA Advisory Board is an actively engaged, independent body whose purpose is to examine the course of instruction and management at the Academy and provide feedback to the Secretary of Transportation. The Board also advises the Superintendent and Maritime Administrator to ensure the best possible educational atmosphere for all Midshipmen. The Advisory Board held meetings on 29 September 2016 and 12 January 2017. This governing body's meetings are closed, but the Advisory Board provides reports to the Secretary of Transportation and the Board of Visitors (BOV). On 10 June 2016, the Advisory Board sent its *2016 Annual Report to the Secretary of Transportation* (the full report is available at <https://www.usmma.edu/about/leadership/2016-advisory-board-report>). The Board recognized that progress has been made over the past year towards achieving the goals and objectives established in *The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Strategic Plan: 2012-2017*, the Directives issued by then-Secretary Foxx in 2014, and recommendations included in the Board's previous Annual Reports. They also noted the following items of importance:

- All 47 of the GAO findings from the 2009 report have been satisfactorily resolved.
- The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is properly funded and is being implemented.
- Funding was restored for faculty development.

There are still three areas of immediate concern to the Board: safety of Midshipmen (preventing and ending sexual harassment and assault); governance, leadership, and administration (maintaining regional accreditation); and strategic planning (advancing strategic goals and objectives). This report will address these concerns in the sections on Standards 2, 4, 5, and 9.

The Executive Summary of the *2016 Annual Report to the Secretary of Transportation* is located in Appendix B.

Board of Visitors – As required by law, the Board of Visitors (BOV) provides independent advice and recommendations on matters relating to the Academy. The BOV examines the state of morale and discipline, the curriculum, instruction, physical equipment, fiscal affairs, and academic methods of the Academy, as well as other matters relating to the Academy at the Board's discretion. The Board met on 13 July 2016 and 14 November 2016 to receive briefings on the state of the Academy. The Board's meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for the Board to hear comments from the Academy's primary interest groups. Topics discussed during this year's meetings included accreditation and the Sea Year Stand Down. The BOV also receives a report from the Advisory Board. Minutes from the BOV meetings are available at <https://www.usmma.edu/about/leadership/bov-minutes-0>.

Maritime Education and Training Executive Review Board (METERB) – The METERB is a new board established to provide governance, oversight, strategic direction, and advocacy for the Academy. The members of the METERB are all senior executives within MARAD who answer to the Executive Director (Agency Chief Operating Officer) and oversee the daily operation of the Agency including resources allocated for the operation and maintenance of the Academy. The Maritime Administrative Order establishing the METERB and its Charter are located in Appendix C.

In its early stages, the members of the METERB met weekly or monthly to develop a better understanding of the findings of the MSCHE reaccreditation report and to work cooperatively with the Office of Institutional Assessment to identify areas in which bureaucracy and impediments to efficiency could be simplified, or streamlined. Beginning in February 2017, the METERB standing committees began working directly with the Academy division heads on operational issues. The standing committees will provide reports to the full Board on a quarterly basis. The Board will make appropriate policy recommendations to the Maritime Administrator and provide strategic guidance to the Superintendent. At the November 2016 BOV meeting, the Deputy Maritime Administrator explained, "The purpose of the METERB is not to manage the Academy operations, but to provide strategic guidance and facilitation within DOT."

Academy Control over Institutional Functions

After the GAO report of 2009, MARAD changed the Maritime Administrative Order (MAO) that describes the organization and authorities of the Academy to restrict its control over financial, human resources, and procurement functions. Now that the Academy has fully implemented all 47 GAO recommendations and adequate internal controls are in place, the Academy initiated action to restore the Academy's authority and responsibility over those

institutional functions, which are necessary to efficiently and effectively accomplish its mission. On 7 February 2017, RADM James A. Helis sent a formal memorandum to Mr. Joel Szabat, Executive Director serving in lieu of the Maritime Administrator, requesting changes to the Maritime Administrative Orders that address the organization and authorities of the Academy (MAO 150-1) and faculty hiring authorities (MAO 710-181-0-A3) (Appendix D). The requested changes are under consideration by the Executive Director.

Proposed changes to MAO 150-1 would assign direct reporting authority for the Office of Human Resources and Office of Procurement to the Academy's Executive Officer, with concurrent reporting responsibility to the MARAD Director, Office of Human Resources, and MARAD Director, Office of Acquisition, respectively. The MARAD Director, Office of Acquisition, will continue to have functional procurement oversight as the Head of Contracting Activity (HCA) for MARAD. It would also return direct reporting authority for the Office of Academy Financial Management to the Superintendent, with concurrent reporting responsibility to the MARAD Associate Administrator for Budget and Programs/Chief Financial Officer.

Changes to MAO 710-181-0-A3 would delegate authority for the administration of the Excepted Service Appointment Program (faculty appointments) to the Superintendent vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources. This ensures that the Superintendent has "the authority and responsibility, assigned or delegated from DOT and/or MARAD as appropriate, to ensure adequate faculty, staff, and administration to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations." Prior to making the request, the Academy discussed the changes with Local AFGE 3732, the union that represents the faculty, and it had no objections to the changes. Changes to the Faculty Hiring Policy for Excepted Service would include:

- a. Administration of the Excepted Service Appointment Program is delegated to the Superintendent, vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources.
- b. The authority to approve the hiring of a candidate who does not have veteran's preference over a candidate with veteran's preference is delegated to the Superintendent, vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources.
- c. Advance-in-hiring rates above the minimum step of the rank will be approved by the Superintendent, vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources.
- d. Applications for faculty positions will be screened by the Director of the USMMA Office of Human Resources, assisted by members of the faculty with appropriate expertise, as designated by the Academic Dean.

Summary of Compliance with Standard 4

The Academy has a system of governance with clearly defined roles in policy development and decision-making. This structure includes a newly formalized Cabinet; a new governing body, the METERB, which has decision authority and fiduciary responsibility, assures institutional

integrity, advocates for resource development, and provides strategic guidance consistent with the Academy's mission; and a Faculty Forum that is preparing to implement a new senate model to strengthen the faculty's role in shared governance. MARAD and the Academy are working toward meeting the Visiting Team's requirement to "restore the means, authority, and responsibility over the institutional functions of personnel hiring, financial planning and management, and procurement" to the Superintendent. MARAD is currently considering the Academy's proposed revisions to the MAO describing the Academy's organizational structure to restore authority for those institutional functions, which are "required to effectively and efficiently accomplish the Academy's mission."

STANDARD 5 – ADMINISTRATION

The Academy filled key administrator positions in 2016. The Academy hired a Director of Institutional Assessment, a Director of Admissions, and a Director for the Office of Academy Financial Management. The Academy stalled in its ability to hire an Academic Dean because the position was transitioned from a Senior Executive Service (SES) position to an excepted service faculty appointment. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer (Diversity Officer) hiring was delayed in order to modify the position description to include elements similar to those for diversity officers at institutions of higher education. Since the Commission's June 2016 action, the Academy faced additional normal departures of key personnel, including the Commandant of Midshipmen, Director of Information Technology, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), and External Affairs Officer.

The President put a government-wide hiring freeze in place on 23 January 2017, which has delayed hiring activities for many of the vacant positions at the Academy. The freeze prohibits federal agencies from filling positions other than those related to public safety and national security. The Secretary of Transportation approved eight USMMA positions as exempt from the freeze under these criteria, and the Academy is moving to fill those positions immediately. These positions include the SAPRO Program Manager/SARC (ready to advertise), two SARC Assistants (one ready to advertise, one tentative offer accepted), Academic Dean (posted), Commandant of Midshipmen (posted), EEO (Diversity) Officer (ready to advertise), Instructor-Electrical Engineer (posted), and Marine Transportation Professor (employee commenced employment on 21 February 2017). Documentation on the hiring freeze and current guidance for federal agencies are located in Appendix E.

Although key administrative, regimental, and academic positions do not have permanent employees, the Academy is still able to perform its mission due to the high quality of interim and acting appointees in those positions. The expertise of interim and acting appointees, along with their dedication and determination to serve the Midshipmen, enables the Academy to continue delivering an exceptional education and support services to the Midshipmen. The status of the key positions and the qualifications of the interim or acting appointees are as follows:

- The Academic Dean position continues to be held by an interim appointee. The recruitment package is complete and Human Resources posted the vacancy announcement. The Interim Academic Dean, CAPT Preston De Jean, is a tenured Associate Professor of Business and Maritime Law in the Department of Marine Transportation. He served as Assistant Dean for Academic Support Programs for three years prior to appointment as Interim Dean. CAPT De Jean holds a Juris Doctor from the Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and a Masters of Law in Taxation from Golden Gate University in San Francisco, California. He previously worked in higher education administration as Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs for the Southern University System in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In addition, he has completed studies at the Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education, where he received a certificate in the Art and Practice of Leadership. In his tenure at the

Academy, he spearheaded the creation of the Maritime Law Society and served as Chair of the Self-Study Steering Committee for the 2016 Decennial Reaccreditation.

- A detailee from the MARAD Office of Civil Rights currently covers the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer position. The Academy posted the position three times and was not successful in the search for the ideal candidate. Consequently, the Academy modified the requirements in the position description to include higher education diversity experience. Human Resources is preparing the vacancy announcement. MARAD is assisting the Academy with EEO coverage by sending one of its EEO Specialists, Rachel Kizito-Ramos, to the Academy twice a month. Ms. Kizito-Ramos provided “Prevention of Sexist Behavior” training to the faculty and staff, spearheaded programs for recognizing ethnic diversity, arranged for Academy faculty and staff to take the Federal Equal Opportunity Climate Survey, and is assisting with the revision of the Superintendent Instruction on sexual harassment.
- The Supervisory Human Resources Specialist has been on medical leave since June 2015 and his position remains encumbered. While the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs negotiates this case, MARAD attempted to fill a 13-month term position, but the search did not yield any qualified applicants. Ray Venkersammy, the senior Human Resources Specialist, leads operations in the Office of Human Resources. Mr. Venkersammy has worked in human resources since 1994 and has been in the Academy’s Office of Human Resources since June 2004. Mr. Venkersammy is a qualified classifier for the Academy. He is experienced in all aspects of Human Resources operations, including recruiting, staffing, equal employment opportunity, training, and benefits.
- The Commandant of Midshipmen resigned in December 2016. Human Resources posted the vacancy announcement in February 2017. The Deputy Commandant, Captain Mikel Stroud, serves as Commandant under a temporary promotion. CAPT Stroud is a 20-year veteran of the United States Marine Corps, where he held leadership positions and worked in logistics. CAPT Stroud worked at the State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College for eight years, where he was hired as a Regimental Battalion Officer and promoted soon after to Senior Battalion Officer. CAPT Stroud began his employment at the Academy as Deputy Commandant in September 2016 and became the Acting Commandant in December 2016. CAPT Stroud’s years of employment with SUNY Maritime provided him with a solid foundation in regimental operations and his transition from SUNY to the Academy was seamless. He has been instrumental in developing a program to reintegrate Midshipmen back into the Regiment after they return from Sea Year and he is spearheading revision of the Midshipman Regulations (student code of conduct).
- The former Director of Information Technology accepted a faculty appointment in the Department of Marine Transportation in November 2016. The former director continues to provide coverage for information technology issues and works collaboratively with the Executive Officer, John Demers, to manage the Information Technology Department.

Prior to coming to the Academy, Mr. Demers was responsible for information technology operations as Chief Operations Officer for the Port of Hueneme. The recruitment package is ready for processing as soon as the President lifts the hiring freeze.

- The External Affairs Officer position was vacated in July 2016. The recruitment package is in Human Resources for processing. The current Public Affairs Specialist, Veronica Barry, previously worked as the Career Placement Specialist in the Office of Professional Development and Career Services (PD&CS). Before coming to the Academy, Ms. Barry was the Marine Personnel Manager at a US-Flag shipping company and the Director of Marine Personnel at another contracted by Military Sealift Command. Ms. Barry transferred to the External Affairs Office in 2012, where she uses her knowledge of the maritime industry and familiarity with operations of the Regiment to promote the Academy to external media sources. She works closely with the MARAD's Office of Congressional and Public Affairs to ensure solidarity and uniformity of messaging. Ms. Barry coordinates events, manages content on the Academy website, hosts tours, and works on matters of Congressional interest.
- The SARC transferred to another federal position in December 2016. A new position description was created modifying the SARC to a SAPRO Program Manager/SARC to better meet the needs of the Academy. The recruitment package is in Human Resources and a vacancy announcement is being prepared. The Deputy Superintendent is the acting SAPRO Program Manager and four Victim Advocates support the SAPR Program. The lead Victim Advocate is responsible for the 24/7 hotline and all four Victim Advocates are available to accept reports. There is also a Sea Year Coordinator in the office and available to Midshipmen during regular business hours. The Sea Year Coordinator and the Victim Advocates made rounds to each Midshipmen Company to introduce themselves and ensure Midshipmen know who to contact in the event of an issue until the Academy fills the SAPRO Manager/SARC position. In addition, the SAFE Center, a local non-profit agency the Academy currently consults with, provides 24/7 support to the Sea Year Coordinator, Victim Advocates and Midshipmen as needed.

A review of the Academy's administrative structure led to the addition of an Executive Officer position in the Superintendent's Office. The Executive Officer provides oversight and integration for the administrative functions of the Academy including human resources, procurement, facilities engineering and maintenance, information technology, and numerous other internal processes. The Executive Officer began employment on 9 January 2017. This additional senior-level administrator at the Academy relieves the Deputy Superintendent of extensive administrative management responsibilities and provides her with more time to focus on strategic-level program management. In addition, the Academy is realigning campus-wide Administrative Services (i.e. trash, labor, etc.) by moving them under the Executive Officer, leaving only Midshipman Services (i.e. uniforms, books, laundry, etc.) under the Commandant of Midshipmen. With the on boarding of the Executive Officer, Director of Academy Financial Management, Director of Institutional Assessment, and Director of Admissions, the Academy is

no longer “severely handicapped by staffing issues,” particularly at the leadership level, as was noted by the Visiting Team.

MARAD and the Academy will revise the MAO that describes the Academy’s administrative structure to add the Executive Officer position and reflect changes in the administrative structure of the Academy in recent years including:

- Expansion of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program to include a SAPR Office with a Department Head (SAPRO Program Manager/SARC) and additional staff;
- Expansion of the Office of Institutional Assessment to include additional staff;
- Separation of Midshipman Services and Administrative Services in order to better align reporting authorities and improve services;
- Addition of the Academic Center for Excellence; and
- Addition of the Office of Student Activities.

The Organizational Chart reflecting the changes are located in Appendix F.

Although there are interim appointees in several leadership positions, some for an extended period, the Academy’s 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results showed significant improvement in employee perceptions of effective leadership, compared to the 2015 FEVS results. The FEVS is a tool that measures employees’ perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies. The FEVS provides government employees with the opportunity to share their perceptions of their work experiences, their agencies, and their leaders.

This year, 407,789 employees across the federal government responded to the survey out of the 889,590 receiving the survey, for a response rate of 45.8%. Survey participants represent 80 agencies across the Federal Government. Full-time and part-time permanent, non-seasonal employees were eligible to participate in the survey. The 2016 survey instrument remained unchanged from the 2015 survey. In the 2016 FEVS, the Academy showed significant gains in almost every category as compared with 2015 survey results. The table below presents the two-year comparison scores for MARAD and USMMA.

2016 FEVS Scores: Two-Year MARAD Comparison					
Workplace Environment Categories	MARAD 2016	MARAD 2015	USMMA 2016	USMMA 2015	USMMA Difference from 2015
Sample Size	218	239	22	29	-7
Best Places to Work Index	69.50%	66.40%	65.1%	53.4%	11.7%
Work-Life Balance	69.4%	67.2%	66.4%	50.2%	16.2%
Effective Leadership: Empowerment	59.7%	54.6%	55.6%	38.5%	17.1%
Effective Leadership: Senior Leaders	60.2%	54.7%	44.4%	28.0%	16.4%
Effective Leadership: Supervisor	73.5%	75.9%	69.9%	71.3%	-1.4%
Effective Leadership: Fairness	61.3%	59.5%	70.3%	51.7%	18.6%

Training and Development	62.5%	58.3%	49.0%	44.6%	4.4%
Pay	62.9%	54.2%	65.1%	42.4%	22.7%
Strategic Management	61.3%	56.4%	54.8%	38.5%	16.3%
Innovation	69.5%	66.1%	69.4%	58.4%	11.0%
Performance-Based Rewards and Advancement	56.5%	52.1%	54.5%	38.4%	16.1%
Employee Skills-Mission Match	79.4%	79.3%	84.6%	73.6%	11.0%
Teamwork	68.9%	58.3%	69.3%	54.4%	14.9%
Support for Diversity	63.4%	67.6%	68.7%	50.9%	17.8%

In addition to improving its FEVS scores in 2016, the Academy out performed both DOT and government-wide scores on the Best Places to Work Index. The table below presents the scores for USMMA, MARAD, DOT and all federal agencies.

2016 FEVS Scores: Government-wide Comparison				
Workplace Environment Categories	USMMA	MARAD	DOT	ALL FEDERAL AGENCIES
Sample Size	22	218	14,871	407,789
Best Places to Work Index	65.1%	69.50%	63.4%	59.4%
Work-Life Balance	66.4%	69.4%	64.1%	59.6%
Effective Leadership: Empowerment	55.6%	59.7%	50.5%	45.6%
Effective Leadership: Senior Leaders	44.4%	60.2%	46.2%	45.3%
Effective Leadership: Supervisor	69.9%	73.5%	66.7%	63.7%
Effective Leadership: Fairness	70.3%	61.3%	59.5%	54.1%
Training and Development	49.0%	62.5%	60.8%	58.5%
Pay	65.1%	62.9%	56.3%	55.4%
Strategic Management	54.8%	61.3%	55.4%	53.3%
Innovation	69.4%	69.5%	61.5%	61.1%
Performance-Based Rewards and Advancement	54.5%	56.5%	44.1%	43.5%
Employee Skills-Mission Match	84.6%	79.4%	77.9%	76.0%
Teamwork	69.3%	68.9%	69.2%	64.6%
Support for Diversity	68.7%	63.4%	58.5%	56.8%

The significant improvement in 2016 FEVS scores indicates that the Academy has been able to function more effectively and decrease employee perceptions that the Academy lacks an adequate administrative structure, as was indicated in the Visiting Team's Report.

Summary of Compliance with Standard 5

The Academy filled several key leadership positions in 2016 and made improvements to its administrative structure by creating a new senior leadership position and realigning functional areas to administrative leaders with appropriate skills and expertise. In addition, the Office of Human Resources is working aggressively to fill the eight positions approved by the Secretary of Transportation as exceptions from the Presidential hiring freeze. Although DOT and all federal agencies continue to navigate the requirements and processes set forth in the hiring freeze, Academy Department Heads and Human Resources Specialists work diligently to ensure recruitment packages and vacancy announcements are ready as soon as the freeze ends. Despite the personnel challenges the Academy faces, capable and dedicated interim and acting appointees provide operational and strategic leadership and continue to advance the Academy's mission and goals. The Academy's administrative structure is sound and its talented leadership and staff are working collaboratively for continuous improvement and overall institutional effectiveness.

STANDARD 3 – INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Academy Control over Institutional Resources

In August 2009, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report that identified pervasive internal control deficiencies that resulted in 47 recommendations for corrective action. Three primary areas of focus for the GAO were internal controls, financial reporting, and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) oversight. As a result, Congress directed DOT to implement extensive oversight of the Academy's financial management activities. As a result, DOT and MARAD assumed day-to-day direct oversight of the Academy's key business processes - financial management, procurement and human resources.

The Academy's financial management practices prior to Fiscal Year 2009 resulted in the implementation of restrictive Congressional language intended to provide DOT control over the Academy's finances. Since 2009, the Academy has had the following language (or similar) in its appropriations bill:

“Provided, that amounts apportioned for the United States Merchant Marine Academy shall be available only upon allotments made personally by the Secretary of Transportation or the Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs: Provided further, That the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and the Director of the Office of Resource Management of the United State Merchant Marine Academy may not be allotment holders for the United States Merchant Marine Academy, and the Administrator of the Maritime Administration shall hold all allotments made by the Secretary of Transportation or the Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs under the previous proviso: Provided further, That 50 percent of the funding made available for the United States Merchant Marine Academy under this heading shall be available only after the Secretary, in consultation with the Superintendent and the Maritime Administrator, completes a plan detailing by program or activity how such funding will be expended at the Academy, and this plan is submitted to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.”

These measures ensured the Academy had sufficient oversight and continued to make progress with corrective actions.

To improve financial management practices, MARAD created a permanent position of Assistant Chief Financial Officer of the Maritime Administration for Academy Operations (now called the Director, Office of Academy Financial Management (OAFM)) with direct reporting responsibility to the MARAD CFO. This action provided a senior MARAD financial official on-site at the Academy with authority to conduct needed oversight and monitor financial activities on a real time basis. Currently, the Director of OAFM prepares monthly financial reports for the MARAD CFO that ensure adequate financial controls are in place and operating effectively. More importantly, the Academy fully transitioned to the Department-wide financial management system in Fiscal Year 2009, allowing DOT and MARAD to access the Academy's financial records at any time.

To address deficiencies in internal controls, the Academy established policies, guidelines, and procedures to ensure all managers engage in ongoing risk assessment and exercise good internal control. The Internal Control Program provides assurance of the effectiveness and efficiency of Academy-wide operations, reliability of financial reporting, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Academy has a Risk Management Officer (Internal Control Officer) responsible for coordinating reviews of internal controls and corrective action plans. The Academy reports corrective action plans to MARAD for review on a monthly basis.

To address oversight for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), a USMMA CIP Senior Advisory Council monitors progress on current USMMA CIP projects. The work of the Senior Advisory Council continues and receives support from the CIP Working Group, which brings together MARAD and USMMA staff, along with staff from the budget, legal and management offices in the Office of the Secretary, to regularly discuss and monitor the progress of USMMA CIP projects. An internal tracking system tracks ongoing projects and the CIP Working Group meets monthly to review the status and current issues affecting all CIP projects. The Academy is required to update its capital improvement plan for the next five-year period and submit the plan to Congress each March.

In November 2015, the Academy implemented the final GAO recommendation. Therefore, the Secretary of Transportation initiated action to ensure that the Academy has access to its approved budget in a manner that supports the effective, efficient, and timely use of financial resources by requesting that Congress strike the restrictive language in future appropriations bills.

Legislative Changes to Federal Appropriations Language

On 19 December 2016, then-Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx sent formal correspondence (Appendix G) to committee chairs of both the U. S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives requesting that the Committee on Appropriations remove the allotment and funding restriction provisions within the Maritime Administration's Operations and Training account as proposed in the Fiscal Year 2017 Senate Appropriations Bill (S. 2844). The proviso restricting the release of 50 percent of the Academy's funding until a spend plan is submitted was removed from the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017, which provides for continuing appropriations through 28 April 2017. The Act became Public Law 114-254 on 12 December 2016. While DOT will retain its oversight role, these statutory changes give the Superintendent and the Academy direct control over Academy's resources. The Director for the OAFM and the MARAD CFO will monitor Congressional action on future appropriations bills to ensure removal of the language preventing the Superintendent from being the allotment holder for Academy funds from future appropriation bills, as requested by the Secretary of Transportation. They will pursue the request until Congress completes the action to strike all of the restrictive language.

As noted in the Visiting Team's report, the Academy's budget planning and execution processes can be challenging for a hybrid government agency/institution of higher education. Changes to appropriations bills that restrict the Academy's timely access to its resources will facilitate the

availability of funds. The Academy will always be susceptible to the limitations of Continuing Resolutions and unpredictable government funding allocations, but in general, the Academy has control over how the allocation is spent. In order to address this issue further, the Academy is focusing on improvement of its budgetary and resource planning, which will be discussed in the section on Standard 2—Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal.

Institutional Control Over Academy Functions

In response to concerns over the Academy's lack of control over the institutional functions of personnel hiring, procurement, and financial planning and management, the Office of Institutional Assessment established peer-led work groups to investigate these issues and provide recommendations for improvement to Academy leadership and the METERB. Specifically, the work groups examined processes and workflows and made recommendations on ways to restore institutional control and improve effectiveness of these functions. This section of the report briefly describes recommendations offered by the three work groups.

Procurement Work Group

- Grant Superintendent direct authority over the Office of Procurement.
- Increase training opportunities for employees on procurement processes and systems.
- Establish a permanent Procurement Advisory Group.
- Work with Procurement and Finance to streamline the purchase card process.
- Assess staffing levels in Procurement and Finance to ensure adequate customer support.

Financial Management Work Group

- Grant Superintendent direct authority over OAFM.
- Remove restrictive language in appropriations bills that prevent efficient and timely access to Academy funding.
- Document details of the internal budget formulation process and operating plan development.
- Develop department heads on budgeting and financial management processes.

Human Resources Work Group

- Grant Superintendent direct authority over the Office of Human Resources.
- Grant Superintendent authority to execute the approved HR budget.
- Educate Academy community on the prioritization of the vacancy list.
- Prepare Academy leaders to develop, engage, train, and retain personnel.
- Develop staffing plan to include retirement projections, succession planning, training up staff, and professional development plans for Academy stars.
- Train department heads in position (staffing) management and HR budgeting.

The work groups will present recommendations to the Senior Management Council (SMC) in March. The SMC will review the recommendations and create action plans to implement them, where appropriate. The implementation of many of these recommendations will return

authorities to the Academy and improve Academy employees' perceived level of control over institutional functions and resources.

As discussed in the section on Standard 4—Leadership and Governance—the Academy initiated action to restore the Academy's authority and responsibility over the hiring process for faculty and staff, which is necessary to ensure adequate faculty, staff, and administration to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectation." On 7 February 2017, RADM James A. Helis sent a formal memorandum to Mr. Joel Szabat, MARAD Executive Director serving in lieu of the Maritime Administrator, requesting changes to the Maritime Administrative Orders (MAOs) that address the organization and authorities of the Academy (MAO 150-1) and faculty hiring authorities (MAO 710-181-0-A3). The requested changes are under consideration by the Executive Director.

Requested changes to MAO 150-1 would assign direct reporting authority for the Office of Human Resources to the Academy's Executive Officer, with concurrent reporting responsibility to the MARAD Director, Office of Human Resources. Changes to MAO 710-181-0-A3 would delegate authority for the administration of the Excepted Service Appointment Program (faculty appointments) to the Superintendent vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources. Prior to making this request, the Academy discussed the changes with Local AFGE 3732, the union that represents the faculty, and it had no objections to the changes. Changes to the Faculty Hiring Policy for Excepted Service include:

- a. Administration of the Excepted Service Appointment Program is delegated to the Superintendent, vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources.
- b. The authority to approve the hiring of a candidate who does not have veteran's preference over a candidate with veteran's preference is delegated to the Superintendent, vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources.
- c. Advance-in-hiring rates above the minimum step of the rank will be approved by the Superintendent, vice the MARAD Director of Human Resources.
- d. Applications for faculty positions will be screened by the Director of the USMMA Office of Human Resources, assisted by members of the faculty with appropriate expertise, as designated by the Academic Dean.

The MARAD Office of Human Resources will continue to provide HR services and support to USMMA.

Summary of Compliance with Standard 3

Now that the Academy implemented the final GAO recommendation, more timely access to and control over its financial resources is required. Therefore, the Secretary of Transportation initiated Congressional action to strike the restrictive language in future appropriations bills. The proviso restricting the release of 50 percent of the Academy's funding until a spend plan is submitted was removed from the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017. MARAD and the Academy will continue to monitor Congressional action on future

appropriations bills to ensure removal of the language preventing the Superintendent from being the allotment holder for Academy funds from future appropriation bills. The Academy also addressed the concerns about the Superintendent's lack of direct control over the hiring process. The Superintendent formally requested changes to the Maritime Administrative Orders (MAOs) that address the organization and authorities of the Academy and faculty hiring authorities. The requested changes are under consideration by the MARAD Executive Director.

Per the Commission's guidance, the Academy's Title IV cohort defaults rates are listed below.



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School Default Rates FY 2013, 2012, and 2011

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OPE ID	School	Type	Control	PRGMS		FY2013	FY2012	FY2011
002892	UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY 300 STEAMBOAT ROAD KINGS POINT NY 11024-1699	Bachelor's Degree	Public	Both (FFEL/FDL)	Default Rate	1.5	2.9	2.4
					No. in Default	1	2	2
					No. in Repay	64	68	81
					Enrollment figures	1,061	1,071	1,049
					Percentage Calculation	6	6.3	7.7

ENROLLMENT: To provide context for the Cohort Default Rate (CDR) data we include enrollment data (students enrolled at any time during the year) and a corresponding percentage (borrowers entering repayment divided by that enrollment figure). While there is no direct relationship between the timing of when a borrower entered repayment (October 1 through September 30) and any particular enrollment year, for the purpose of these data, we have chosen to use the academic year ending on the June 30 prior to the beginning of the cohort year (e.g., FY 2013 CDR Year will use 2011-2012 enrollment).

Current Date : 02/14/2017

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Note: USDE Financial Responsibility Composite Scores; and the status with regard to Heightened Cash Management with USDE.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION 7 – INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING
STANDARD 7 – INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT
STANDARD 2 – PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

Strategic Planning

The Academy's Strategic Plan for 2012-2017 was developed by an agency contracted by DOT and driven by DOT senior staff. According to the 2016 Advisory Board report, "this approach may have been appropriate during the unusual and extraordinary situation that the Academy was in between 2009 and 2012. However, some of the Academy faculty and staff who participated in the process reported to the Board that there were not committed to the goals and objectives contained in the Strategic Plan...Consequently it has been difficult for the Academy as a whole to work cohesively towards meeting the Plan's objectives" (2016 Advisory Board Report).

It is time for the Academy to create its next five-year strategic plan. The success of strategic planning depends on the process and methodology used; therefore, the Office of Institutional Assessment proposed use of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology for strategic planning.

Appreciative Inquiry and the SOAR Methodology

In the 1980s, David Cooperrider, a professor at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, developed a new model for organizational change, which he termed "Appreciative Inquiry." AI is a positive way to embrace organizational change based on a simple assumption: Every organization has something that works right—things that give life when it is most alive, effective, successful, and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities.

The basic tenets of AI are:

- In every society, organization, or group, something works.
- What we focus on becomes our reality.
- Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities.
- The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
- If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
- It is important to value differences.
- The language we use creates our reality (Knell, 2010).

AI begins by identifying what is positive and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy and vision for change (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, 2005, p. xvii). AI evolved into an organizational development approach to change management that supports organizational transformation (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). Based on the results of the Culture Audit (to be discussed in the section on Standard 9 – Student Support Services), the Academy is

in need of transformative change. However, “resistance to change is a well-established fact of organizational life, and for good reason. Change always involves uncertainty. Invariably it involves more work. And we have learned by experience that change is not always for the better” (Thomas, 2016). AI’s transformative potential comes from focusing on changing how people think, rather than what they do (Bushe and Kassam, 2005). The Academy requires the ability to think and act strategically in order to improve its organizational capacity and the creation of the next strategic plan is the perfect opportunity to develop those skills across the organization.

AI is a particular way of asking questions and envisioning the future that fosters positive relationships and builds on the basic goodness in people and the organization. The use of powerful questions focuses inquiry, surfaces assumptions and biases, and opens up new possibilities for ideas and meaning (Brown et al., 2005). In the process, AI enhances the organization’s capacity for collaboration and cultural change. “Appreciative Inquiry results in a generative metaphor; that is, provocative statements that create new possibilities and compel new action” (Bushe and Kassam, 2005).

AI uses a 4-stage cycle:

- **DISCOVER:** the identification of organizational processes that work well, focusing on strengths, best practices, and values.
 - Inquire into exceptionally positive moments
 - Share the stories and life-giving forces
- **DREAM:** The envisioning of future states and processes that could work well in the future, given the nature and capabilities of the organization.
 - Create shared images of a preferred future
- **DESIGN:** The planning, design, and prioritizing of processes and aspects of the organization that could realize the dream.
 - Innovate and improvise ways to create that future.
- **DESTINY:** Implementation planning of the proposed design and action planning to strengthen the capability of the system to sustain ongoing positive change.



Instead of using the traditional SWOT method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), strategic planning with AI uses a new way of thinking: SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results). The SOAR technique is a specific application of AI principles, providing organizations with an improved framework for strategic planning. SOAR can be “a profoundly positive approach to strategic thinking and planning that allows an organization to construct its future through collaboration, shared understanding and commitment to action” (Stavros and Hinrichs, 2009). Appreciative Inquiry provides a framework for the strategic planning process, from creation to implementation.

Creating momentum by building a strategic plan together enables stakeholders to have a vested, positive grasp on building success. Focusing on and maximizing what organizations do well creates energy and excitement, pushing individuals and organizations toward optimal performance. The SOAR process also creates and aligns purpose and values as they relate to workplace activity, helping to engage employees. Through co-creating, SOAR provides opportunities to identify and discuss strengths and opportunities, reframe any underlying issues so that they are viewed through the eyes of possibility, carve out the future and solidify measures to gauge success (Keene and Scott, 2016).

The Academy’s strategic planning process using Appreciative Inquiry and SOAR will be designed by a core planning team, but will look something like this:

Step 1—Create a core planning team (leadership team) and train them in AI. Co-create the engagement strategy and inquiry design together under the guidance of a consultant. [Some sources have a 5-D model, where the 1st D is **DEFINE**.]

Step 2—**DISCOVERY**: Conduct a series of focus groups with a variety of stakeholder groups asking powerful positive questions. Bring the data collected in this step to a summit meeting. Conduct further inquiry at the summit with participants and map the positive core. Rich dialogue here deepens the understanding of the organization’s strengths, values, and opportunities.

Step 3—**DREAM**: Identify aspirations and results. Create a compelling vision of the future that has the commitment of members of the organization and brings forward the best of the

institution. Create possibility statements capturing participant's highest aspirations that describe the compelling vision of the future.

Step 4—**DESIGN**: Identify the highest strategic opportunities (internal and external to the institution) to move toward the desired future. Decide which opportunities have the most potential.

Step 5—**DELIVERY**: Self-organize around each goal area. Plan actions and gain individual and collaborative commitments. Develop capacity by providing support, resources, and training and identify integration linkages between the goal areas. Implement and measure success. Monitor, improvise, innovate, and re-inquire. The strategic plan becomes a living process of inquiry, continually aligning strengths with opportunity in service of the desired future.

(The above model was adapted from McKenna, Daykin, Mohr, and Silbert, 2007.)

The AI methodology has been applied to a wide variety of organizations with outstanding results (Sprangel, Stavros, and Cole, 2011). AI has been used in businesses, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, communities, local governments, and religious institutions to envision and create change. AI is a good planning process to use in situations multiple stakeholders need to be included or where a bottom-up cultural change is needed. SOAR is particularly useful if employees are un-engaged and demonstrate low morale, and for multi-stakeholder situations because it seeks input about the positivity of an organization's past and potential future. It is also an excellent way to build knowledge and talent within an organization. SOAR can generate knowledge hidden within an organization and grow talent, as well as improve learning dynamics in college and university classrooms (Keene and Scott, 2016).

As described in the Self-Study and the Culture Audit, the Academy faces many challenges as it sets out to develop the next strategic plan. The Office of Institutional Assessment recommended this methodology for strategic planning, because not only can it bring divergent constituents together by creating a shared vision and a living strategic plan, but AI is also an identity formation process, which can reconcile the Academy's many identities into a shared identity.

As Appreciative Inquiry shapes organizational identity, participants' sense of self, belonging, and view of their role within the organization is also shaped through the construction and alignment of the shared vision, goals, and standards. In the process of constructing what could be, the participants are also becoming leaders who are able to enact that preferred future (Priest, Kaufman, Brunton, & Seibel, 2013, p. 29).

In addition, AI has the potential to set the stage for Appreciative Leadership at the Academy. Modern conceptions of leadership emphasize relational perspectives and the process of leaders and followers working together to create positive change (Drath, 2001; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2005; Rost, 1993). Appreciative Leadership is "the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power...to make a difference in the world" (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Radan, 2010, p. 3). When participants in the process are empowered to create

and carry on the work of the organization with a strengths-oriented perspective, they themselves become appreciative leaders (Schiller, Holland, & Riley, 2001).

On 26 January 2017, the Office of Institutional Assessment presented the Appreciative Inquiry model for strategic planning to the Superintendent's Management Council. The Superintendent's Council unanimously endorsed the methodology and agreed to fund a consultant to train a core planning team and a team of facilitators in Appreciative Inquiry. The Office of Institutional Assessment developed a Statement of Work to find a consultant with experience in AI for strategic planning, preferably in higher education, and a Contract Specialist in the Office of Procurement is processing the request (Appendix H).

The Superintendent will soon kick off the beginning of the strategic planning process and name a *Strategic Planning Leadership Team* (steering committee), consisting of faculty and staff representing a cross section of internal constituents. This team is primarily non-managerial faculty and staff, and Midshipmen who represent three Academy divisions, six academic departments, sectors of the military, and those who represent external constituencies such as alumni, parents, and industry. The goal in assembling this team was to select Academy employees who cross multiple constituencies in order to bring divergent identities and viewpoints together and stimulate widespread outreach to external constituencies inviting them to participate in the process.

Institutional Assessment

At the time of the Team's visit, the Academy was without a Director of Institutional Assessment. In its report on Standard 5, the Visiting Team noted that efforts towards institutional effectiveness were halted while that position was vacant and until a new director came on board. Consequently, developing sustainable assessment processes and an Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) received the immediate attention of the new director; however, the lack of buy-in with the current Strategic Plan and performance measures that did not effectively determine the level of progress in achieving the strategic goals created barriers to effective assessment and institutional effectiveness processes. Another barrier to sustaining systematic assessment processes lies in the absence of an effective software application to interactively manage institutional and departmental plans, assessment information, and program review reports. Academy staff has spent time trying to manage information and as a result, have not effectively used the data to inform decision-making and improve student learning. The Office of Institutional Assessment recommended an integrated software platform, which will be discussed in the section on Planning and Assessment Software later in this report.

The Visiting Team also found that the Academy had yet to implement an institutional assessment process that is systematic, organized, and sustainable, and that clearly identified progress on strategic goal attainment through the development of performance measures that are "clearly and purposefully related to the goals they are assessing so they can inform institutional decisions." To address this finding, the Academy, led by the new Director of Institutional Assessment, adopted a new Assessment Framework to facilitate the assessment of student learning and the extent to which Academy departments are achieving their goals. The

Assessment Framework incorporates peer review processes for assessing learning outcomes and departmental goals, where the information is reviewed and recommendations are made at multiple levels to ensure that data is evaluated rigorously and recommended initiatives are prioritized prior to the resource allocation process at the Superintendent's Management Council (Superintendent's Cabinet) level. The Assessment Framework with corresponding committee structures are located in Appendix I.

Progress achieved in institutional assessment relates primarily to the assessment of student learning (as described later in this section). Since the current Strategic Plan lacked buy-in and the level of detail needed to be fully operationalized with well aligned department goals and performance measures, the Academy struggled with sustaining a meaningful assessment process to evaluate institutional effectiveness. The Office of Institutional Assessment will implement the process for assessing institutional and departmental goals (the right side of the Assessment Framework) as the Academy creates the new Strategic Plan. The new processes will flow from the design of the new Strategic Plan.

Course-level assessment is a demonstrated strength of the Academic Division, but as the Visiting Team noted, Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are necessary to integrate and synchronize the efforts of the institution to develop Midshipmen. Beginning in April 2015, the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC) began the process of developing ILOs for the Academy. The AOAC was comprised of faculty and staff from the Academic Division. However, because the Academy recognized that learning occurs across the Academy, both in and out of the classroom, the Committee was expanded to include staff members from co-curricular departments, forming an ILO Committee. The new ILO Committee worked diligently for months in a collaborative manner to negotiate ILOs that would be applicable to every Midshipman, but that also appropriately reflect the Academy's mission.

In October 2016, the group presented a set of draft ILOs that are mapped to the Academy mission to the Superintendent for consideration (Appendix J). The Superintendent determined that since the new strategic planning process would begin in 2017, the ILOs should remain in draft form until the Academy's strategic goals are developed. The rationale for this is that the ILOs should firmly represent the intended outcomes of the Academy and it would be premature to finalize them in advance of the Strategic Plan, which will set the Academy's direction for the next five-year period.

In order to continue developing the assessment process and Institutional Effectiveness Plan, the Director of Institutional Assessment, in collaboration with a small group of AOAC/ILO Committee members, decided that some of the draft ILOs are certain to be on the finalized list and those should be the ILOs used to develop the learning outcomes assessment process. Those ILOs are Leadership, Professional and Technical Skills, and Communication and they will be assessed for the 2017-2018 Academic Year. These are especially important ILOs because:

- 1) The Academy continues its focus on development of the Leadership Program and needs to develop processes to assess the program;

- 2) During Industry Roundtables held in fall 2016, industry partners provided feedback that our graduates could improve their written and oral communication skills; and
- 3) Technical and professional skills are currently being assessed in the course-level assessment process, but those courses need to transition to a focus on learning outcomes more than on grades and senior year Merchant Marine Officer Examination passing rates.

The former AOAC is now working to convert to the structure in the new Assessment Framework, which focuses on learning outcomes at the program and institutional level, rather than solely at the course-level. A detailed description of the Committee's Learning Outcomes Assessment Process is located in Appendix K. In the new Framework, the AOAC will become the Program Learning Outcome Committee (PLOC), and instead of sending course-level assessment reports to the Department Head only, course-level assessment reports will be sent to Program Learning Outcomes Committees (PLOCs) based on the mapping of course learning outcomes to program learning outcomes. The Programs and Program Learning Outcomes Committee Subcommittees are: Marine Engineering, Marine Transportation, General Education, and Leadership. The General Education and Leadership Programs developed Program Learning Outcomes (Appendix L).

The Office of Institutional Assessment will develop a new Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) in parallel with the Academy's Strategic Plan to articulate exactly how the Academy will evaluate the success of the Strategic Plan. There is a Superintendent Instruction on Institutional Effectiveness that addresses the Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC), but it does not describe a plan. Therefore, a new Superintendent Instruction is required to describe the new Assessment Framework, assessment processes and procedures, and assessment committee structures outlined in the Framework.

Planning and Assessment Software

To support institutional planning and continuous improvement efforts across the institution, the Office of Institutional Assessment recognized the need for an integrated, multi-module software platform to facilitate sustainable planning, assessment, and institutional effectiveness processes and recommended a system in use at over 1,000 colleges and universities across the country. This software solution will help the Academy collect and use data to cultivate campus intelligence and make better decisions, focus on continuous improvement and accountability, and tap into insights about every aspect of the educational experience at USMMA. It will also identify opportunities for improvement and track longitudinal data over time to monitor process improvements across the Academy. The absence of such technology with all of this functionality is a primary reason that the Academy has struggled with implementing sustainable planning and assessment processes.

An added benefit of the selected software platform is that it is the only product to administer the research-informed, evidence-based course evaluation tool currently under review by the Academy. The tool will help the Academy better assess its Institutional Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes as part of the newly developed assessment plan and is

designed to control for extraneous circumstances, provide comparative scores, and deliver actionable steps based on current research and theory to improve learning. Most importantly, this tool can help the Academy translate informative course feedback into actionable steps to improve student learning.

The Superintendent's Management Council endorsed the recommended software platform and the Academy anticipates funding this project in the current fiscal year (pending budget allocations after the current CR period concludes on 28 April 2017). The Executive Officer, the Academy's Director of Information Technology, the Director of Institutional Assessment, and MARAD's Information Systems Security Manager are working collaboratively, in consultation with the DOT's Chief Information Officer, to perform technical reviews and information security analysis on the software platform. This review is moving forward and once the risk assessment process is complete, a Contract Specialist can begin the procurement process.

Integrating Other Plans with the Strategic Plan

The Academy has a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that identifies long-term capital improvement needs, prioritizes and aligns capital projects with the Academy's strategic objectives, and takes a phased implementation approach for managing capital improvement projects within fiscal realities. The Academy updates the capital improvement plan annually to include anticipated projects for the next five-year period. Consistent with the recommendations of the 2009 Blue Ribbon Panel Report, commissioned by then-DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, the Academy is taking a comprehensive approach to capital planning. As such, the sequential order for funding CIP projects was established to improve the quality of life for Midshipmen first, then to enhance academic services, and finally to bolster the support structure of campus administrative services.

To better integrate information technology into the Academy's mission and strategic plan, the Office of Institutional Assessment recommended the creation of a Technology Strategic Planning Committee with representatives from all Academy departments. This group has two purposes: 1) to develop and monitor a Technology Strategic Plan; and 2) to develop a process through which new technology requests will be evaluated prior to purchase and implementation. Although there is a technology plan to address network capabilities and upgrades, the Academy did not previously have a plan to leverage technology to improve student learning and streamline the Academy's planning and institutional effectiveness processes. The Academy's student information system is nearing the end of its lifecycle and is due for replacement in the near future. The process of selecting a new system takes between 18 and 24 months and requires a significant amount of planning.

The Technology Strategic Planning Committee will not begin its work until the Academy's Strategic Plan is underway this spring/summer, but the group is currently conducting an inventory of all software applications that are in use across the institution. This will help the Academy to better understand what technologies are currently in use, provide departments with the opportunity to capitalize on the software applications that are already in use in other departments, and determine where there may be costly redundancy. The Committee Chairs

and the Academy's Department of Information Technology will work with the MARAD Information Systems Security Manager to ensure all applications, including web-based applications, have been reviewed for information security protocols or, if not, will perform such review. These processes will help the Academy ensure that it complies with federal information technology standards and is prepared to start the technology strategic planning process with a clear understanding of the technology currently in use at the Academy.

Building on the efforts of the Human Resources Work Group, the Executive Officer is in the early stages of developing a Human Capital Strategy for the Academy. This plan will also be created in parallel with the Strategic Plan and would address the specific goals for the Office of Human Resources and strategies to reach those goals. The Executive Officer's preliminary research revealed that most institutions of higher education have a human capital strategy. The first step in this process will be administering a survey for key leaders at the Academy, which is prepared and ready to implement prior to the start of the strategic planning process.

Financial Planning and Resource Allocation

The Office of Academy Financial Management (OAFM) implemented procedures to improve the Academy's accounting and financial management processes, to include the following:

- Implementation of cost modelling for payroll with adjustments to pay and non-pay splits when each allotment is received, to reduce the need for inefficient payroll drops;
- Improvement of contract cost management, to recover funds for undelivered services and correct obligations within contracts;
- Review of past accounting records to correct errors; correction of these records will provide more accurate insight into program costs, thus improving the Academy's ability to plan;
- Review of reimbursable interagency agreements to ensure that the Academy is being accurately compensated for services rendered;
- Development of standardized templates for collecting budget needs from departments;
- Implementation of standardized templates for spend plan development to ensure department-level spending is approved and allocated before committing resources;
- Promulgation of a notional fiscal planning calendar to keep fiscal planning tasks on track for timely decision-making; and
- Redesigned the Academy's monthly financial reports providing decision-makers with clearer insight into operations versus budget.

In addition, OAFM adopted a Strategy, Execution, and Assessment (SEA) process to guide each fiscal year planning cycle (outlined in the table below). This process will ensure that spending aligns with the Academy's strategic goals and that funds are executed accordingly. An end of year review will assess whether strategic goals were met consistent with funds expended. If not, spend plans for the next fiscal year will be adjusted accordingly. DOT upgraded its information technology systems to integrate purchasing, financial management, and reporting

systems. This will facilitate collection of data and its analysis, leading to more real time decision-making for spending.

	SEA Phase	Purpose	Responsible Party
USMMA Strategic Plan	Strategy	Provides strategic direction for USMMA	Office of the Superintendent, Dean, Commandant, and Executive Officer
Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM)	Strategy	Focuses planning on strategic priorities (for next year's budget); identifies fiscal constraints	Office of the Superintendent, Dean, Commandant, and Executive Officer
Strategic Budget Prioritization	Strategy	Priorities spending proposals	Financial Management Working Group
USMMA Budget Submission	Strategy	Justifies funding request to MARAD, DOT, OMB, and Congress	Office of Academy Financial Management
Annual Operating Plans (AOPs)	Execution	States how programs will execute annual appropriations, aligns appropriations with strategic priorities in AGM	Office of Academy Financial Management review; Superintendent approval
Monthly Budget Reviews	Assessment	Tracks spending in a consistent way, flags financial management issues, ensures spending is consistent with AOPs	Office of Academy Financial Management, Program managers

In December 2016, the Director of OAFM delivered a presentation to Academy Department Heads and Program Managers on the budget process for Fiscal Years 2017, 2018, and 2019. OAFM's full presentation is located in Appendix M.

The Academy is returning some centralized financial functions previously performed by OAFM to the Academy offices and functional units, giving these offices and units greater control over the resources allocated to them. For example, the development of interagency agreements will be coordinated with the requirement owners and the owners will be more involved in the review of interagency bills to ensure that services received were acceptable and met contract terms before payments are authorized. OAFM is also giving offices and functional units greater control over managing the micro-purchases process (purchases under \$3,500). Some of these

changes result from process improvements in the DOT financial management systems. These improvements will provide the Academy with more timely financial information for resource decision-making.

Summary of Compliance Requirement of Affiliation 7, Standard 7, and Standard 2

The Academy will soon kick off its strategic planning process. The Academy faces many challenges as it sets out to develop the next strategic plan, but it will employ Appreciative Inquiry and SOAR techniques in the process because this methodology is proven to bring divergent constituents together. The collaborative process will reaffirm and refine the Academy's Core Values, create a shared vision for the Academy's future, and identify strategic goals with actionable strategies to achieve them. A Technology Strategic Plan and Human Capital Strategy, created concurrently with the Academy Strategic Plan, will ensure resource planning necessary to achieve the goals and the mission. The Academy works diligently to finalize an institutional assessment process that is systematic, organized, and sustainable. The Academy adopted a new Assessment Framework, which will facilitate the assessment of student learning and clearly identify progress toward achieving institutional and departmental goals. The SMC endorsed the procurement of a software platform that will help the institution collect and analyze data for systematic, data-driven decision-making, planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal initiatives that support continuous improvement across the Academy.

STANDARD 9 – STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The safety and security of the young women and men at the United States Merchant Marine Academy is a top priority for DOT, MARAD, and the Academy. As the Advisory Board stated in its June 2016 Report to the Secretary of Transportation, “there is a moral imperative to immediately address the issues of sexual harassment, assault, and retaliation on campus and at sea” (p. 10). While the Academy has instituted a number of measures to build a climate of trust and respect as part of its commitment to eliminating these issues, it has not solved the problem with behavior issues that are not only present at sea, but also are affecting the campus culture.

This section of the report describes the events that have taken place since June 2016, and the actions that the Academy is currently taking to bring about a cultural change, which will provide a safe and respectful learning environment for all Midshipmen.

Sea Year Stand Down

In June 2016, then-Secretary Foxx directed a Sea Year Stand Down in response to reported incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH), hazing, bullying, coercion, and retaliation involving Midshipmen during their time at sea. On 24 June 2016, MARAD and USMMA hosted more than 90 representatives of the maritime industry at a Call-to-Action meeting in Washington, D.C. to address the shipboard working and living environment concerns that led to the Sea Year Stand Down. Topics at the Call-to-Action meeting focused on industry culture, SASH awareness and prevention efforts, industry-wide best practices and reporting protocols, and implementable actions. Members of the maritime industry presented a proposal to improve the quality of life on board vessels and provide a working and training environment that is both safe and respectful for the Midshipmen. Discussions also included how to proactively address the issues, development of training programs involving the companies and mariner unions, assignment of on board mentors, debriefing of all Midshipmen upon completion of their Sea Year training, vessel visits by company operations representatives, and a 24/7 hotline with duress code available to all Midshipmen.

In July 2016, Sea Year resumed on board Federal vessels from the Navy’s Military Sealift Command (MSC) and in August on board MARAD’s Ready Reserve Force (RRF) vessels. Upon review, it was determined that these vessels, operated by U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, Maritime Administration, have appropriate procedures and training in place to provide a suitable learning atmosphere.

Shipboard Climate Compliance Team (SCCT)—MARAD established the 16 member SCCT to develop and implement a company by company review process to determine if those companies had policies in place which would make them eligible for carrying USMMA cadets aboard their ships. The team consists of subject matter experts from MARAD, the Academy, and MSC. MARAD contracted outside assistance to help develop the criteria. The contractor specialized in SASH investigations and company policy development. MARAD also used industry and labor input during the criteria development process. The criteria include seven requirements that include a zero tolerance policy for SASH, vetted mentors on board commercial vessels with cadets, regular crew training, company specific policies on reporting,

investigation and enforcement, and policies requiring no fraternization between crew and Midshipmen. The *Shipboard Climate Compliance Team Evaluation Criteria for Commercial Shipping* is located in Appendix N. The lead of the SCCT makes recommendations to the Superintendent for a decision on the company's Sea Year eligibility. On 15 February 2017, the Superintendent determined that three commercial shipping companies are Sea Year eligible, as recommended by the SCCT, and the Academy began work immediately to return cadets to sea aboard these vessels. On 22 February 2017, the Superintendent determined, based on the recommendation of the SCCT, that a fourth company is now Sea Year eligible.

Concerns About On-time Graduations—Many parents and Midshipmen have expressed concerns about being able to meet all of the requirements for an on-time graduation, and the Academy has taken all steps possible to ensure Midshipmen impacted by the Sea Year Stand Down accumulate the required sea days to graduate on schedule. The United States Coast Guard will credit each cadet with 12 hours (or 1.5 days) for each day they spend on a training vessel. This allows them to earn three days for every two calendar days. Each year, there are a handful of Midshipmen who need to make up sea days in order to meet their at sea requirements, so the Academy is quite experienced in assisting Midshipmen to attain their required sea days, including training vessel trips on weekends and over breaks in the academic schedule. The Academy is closely monitoring sea days for the classes of 2018 and 2019.

The Impact of the Stand Down on Sea Projects—Midshipmen on MSC vessels and other military vessels worked on their sea projects as normal. There were no substantive changes to the Sea Year curriculum. Those assigned to Academy training vessels worked on projects under guidance from the Dean and the oversight of USMMA staff and faculty on those vessels. In early February, the Interim Dean and Assistant Dean for Academic Programs met with Sea Project Coordinators and other faculty and staff members to discuss the impact of the Stand Down on sea project grades. They reported that the Midshipmen who participated in federal-only Sea Year are no further behind academically than any other cohort of Midshipmen. They also presented data reflecting a normal distribution of failures and incompletes on sea projects in the recent sailing periods.

Independent Culture Audit

In August 2016, then-Secretary Foxx decided that additional steps had to be taken to ensure the safety of our Midshipmen at sea and on campus, and to promote a culture of transparency and respect for everyone. DOT used the General Services Administration's "professional services" schedule, containing several hundred companies with the desired professional expertise and ideally suited for the purpose of a cultural assessment, to solicit contract proposals. Proposals from interested companies were received mid-September, and DOT convened a Technical Evaluation Panel to conduct in-depth evaluations. In addition to DOT personnel, the selection committee was comprised of two external professionals with knowledge of SASH issues.

In October 2016, upon the Technical Evaluation Panel's recommendation, DOT announced that Logistics Management Institute (LMI) would perform an independent cultural assessment of the Academy in order to address the root causes of the sexual assault and harassment and other

inappropriate behaviors that have persisted both on campus and during Sea Year. The independent culture audit had two primary objectives: identify the current institutional climate at USMMA and any contributing subcultures and analyze the nature and scope of the problem of sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus and at sea, derived from recent reports, research, survey data, policies, and interviews. Following its 60-day review, LMI provided its analysis with recommendations to Secretary Foxx.

LMI Culture Audit Findings:

LMI reviewed literature, conducted interviews of Academy stakeholders, analyzed and compared data, and developed findings and recommendations. They conducted 162 interviews with DOT Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST), MARAD leaders, and USMMA Advisory Board members; Academy leaders, staff and faculty members, and midshipmen; industry and maritime union representatives, including ship officers and crews; and USMMA alumni.

We identified Academy sexual assault prevention and response gaps relative to comparator organizations, namely federal service academies and state maritime academies. We then identified recommendations that will enable the Academy to begin closing the gaps and address the underlying root causes contributing to the current climate (Executive Summary, LMI Final Report, pp. iii-iv, Appendix O).

LMI's full 138 page *Final Report* is available at <https://www.usmma.edu/sites/usmma.edu/files/docs/USMMAReport%20508.pdf>

In a 6 January 2017, letter to the Superintendent, Secretary Foxx wrote,

The audit reinforces what the Defense Manpower Data Center, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the USMMA Advisory Board and our numerous interactions with Midshipman have told us: that, while the Academy's culture is grounded in a sense of service, discipline and teamwork, our young people are at far greater risk of sexual assault and harassment than they should be and that there are things we can do now and over the longer term to put a stop to it....

In coordination with Maritime Administration (MARAD) leadership, you are hereby directed to continue the vital work that you have started and to utilize the recommendations in the LMI Culture Audit to develop a comprehensive plan to build a climate of trust and respect at the Academy in which all Midshipmen are accepted and can learn and thrive in a safe environment. We must ensure—all of us—that each entering member of the Academy has the best chance of success, free from sexual assault and harassment, as well as other inappropriate behaviors such as bullying, hazing, retaliation and victim blaming, all of which have been reported and triggered a deeper investigation....

I further urge you to take aggressive action to put an end to denial and downplaying among those charged to be part of the solutions. Those who perpetrate or condone these behaviors or look the other way must have no place at the Academy, in the U.S. Merchant Marine or our Nation's Armed Forces. That's also true of our outside partners. Conversely, those who report such behaviors and who stand up for victims—in line with our core values—must be supported. Those individuals must be held up as role models and not subjected to retaliation and ostracism.

The Secretary's full letter is located in Appendix P.

To close these gaps and address the root causes of sexual assault and sexual harassment, LMI recommended that the Academy undertake a strategic approach to preventing and addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment and changing the culture. A few key recommendations from the LMI report include:

- Develop a Sea Year credentialing program that will enable the Academy and industry to maximize program effectiveness while maintaining the health and safety of the Midshipmen;
- Develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Strategic Campaign Plan*; and
- Infuse *core values* into all aspects of Academy life.

The following sections of this report discuss the ways in which the Academy is implementing these and other recommendations.

The LMI *Culture Change Action Plan* is located in Appendix Q.

Expansion of the Academy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office—The Academy established and adequately resourced a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) that is responsible for overall program management and integration of the program across all Academy stakeholders. The Academy will hire a SAPRO Program Manager/SARC, who will provide strategic planning, oversight, and daily management of all SAPRO programs. The office will have two Victim Advocate/Prevention Educator positions and a Sea Year Coordinator. In making this office more robust, the Academy will communicate that it is taking the problem of SASH seriously enough to increase its investment in personnel. The increased staffing provided by these additional positions will enable the SAPRO to provide more training opportunities for Midshipmen, faculty and staff. Human Resources is drafting a vacancy announcement and the SAPRO Manager/SARC position will be advertised as soon as possible, since this position has been determined exempt from the hiring freeze. Interviews for the Victim Advocate/Prevention Educator positions were recently completed and on 16 February 2017, offers were made to the two best candidates. Unfortunately, one candidate had already taken a job because she was uncertain how long the government hiring freeze would delay her employment. The other candidate accepted the position and is now going through the background clearance process.

EverFi—In September 2016, the Academy contracted with EverFi for online interactive training in both SASH and alcohol abuse prevention and education. EverFi’s Haven module addresses the critical issues of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and sexual harassment among student, faculty and staff. Used in more than 650 institutions across the country, Haven has a proven record in improving student perceptions regarding the benefits of bystander intervention. EverFi’s AlcoholEdu module uses adaptive learning, realistic scenarios and hands-on activities to help students make better decisions about alcohol and to educate them on the negative consequences of alcohol abuse. Like Haven, AlcoholEdu has a record of success in reducing alcohol abuse, and particularly heavy drinking, at institutions of higher education. The Academy has already assigned Midshipmen to complete the AlcoholEdu module, and staff and faculty were invited to complete the module on a voluntary basis. The Haven module will be available Midshipmen, faculty and staff in the coming weeks.

Military Service Academy Prevention Summit—In January 2017, 12 members of the USMMA faculty and staff attended this weeklong conference at the United States Air Force Academy. Military service academy representatives, members of the Office of the Secretary of Defense SAPRO, and other service SAPROs attended the meeting. Speakers featured the senior executive advisor for the Department of Defense SAPRO, personnel from the Centers for Disease Control, and the author of the Green Dot Violence Prevention strategy. Despite years of effort in sexual assault prevention training and awareness, there has not been any appreciable decline in the number of sexual assault cases at the service academies, thus the goal of the Summit was to accelerate progress in sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention, reporting and retaliation efforts. Speakers sought to link military service academy prevention, reporting and retaliation activities to the best available scientific evidence for effective revision of interpersonal and self-directed violence strategies and advocated for Midshipmen led sexual assault and sexual harassment programs for maximum effectiveness. Summit workshops showed how separating prevention efforts from response and framing the prevention message in terms of human dignity and respect elicited a much more positive response from students. The Military Service Academy Prevention Summit Agenda is located in Appendix R.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Framework—The Academy developed a comprehensive and integrated Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Framework (so called to avoid confusion with the Academy’s Strategic Plan), which outlines the Academy’s strategic approach to sexual assault prevention and response. This more robust, multi-year strategy establishes strategic goals and objectives, identifies stakeholders, and specifies what will be done to develop key messages, engagement, communication and training strategies, metrics, and action plans. The SAPR Framework’s five strategic goals are *Climate*, *Prevention*, *Response*, *Accountability* and *Assessment*, and are described in the table below.

USMMA SAPR Program Strategic Goals	
Climate	Create a culture intolerant of sexual assault and sexual harassment and behaviors that enable such conduct.
Prevention	Deliver consistent and effective prevention methods and programs.

Response	Improve the availability of response support for sexual assault and sexual harassment victims. Increase victim confidence and lessen the stigma associated with reporting.
Accountability	Achieve high competence in holding offenders appropriately accountable. Improve capability and capacity for reporting, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assault. Elevate leadership engagement in response to sexual assault.
Assessment	Assess and report on program effectiveness, and use assessment information to make improvements in the program.

The full Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Framework is located in Appendix S.

Culture Campaign—A group of 12 USMMA faculty and staff who attended the Military Service Academy Summit on Sexual Assault Prevention learned how separating prevention efforts from response and framing the prevention message in terms of human dignity and respect elicited a much more positive response from students. Inviting Midshipmen to join them, this group has taken the lead in developing a campaign to influence the Academy’s culture in a positive way. The culture campaign will invite the Academy community to stop looking at sexual assault through the lenses of victimization and perpetration and will reframe the message in terms of human dignity and respect. In a paradigm shift, the campaign will point out ways of intervening but without the negativity of the SAPR context. The Acting Deputy Commandant expects to begin rolling out the culture campaign in April 2017. The *Guiding Document for the USMMA Culture Campaign* is located in Appendix T.

It’s On Us Campaign—Led by the Department of Physical Education and Athletics, USMMA is standing up against sexual assault through the *It’s On Us* campaign. Participants in the *It’s On Us* campaign pledge the following:

To recognize that non-consensual sex is sexual assault.

To identify situations in which sexual assault may occur.

To intervene in situations where consent has not or cannot be given.

To create an environment in which sexual assault is unacceptable and survivors are supported.

The Department of Physical Education and Athletics also created an “It’s On Us” video on YouTube showing USMMA’s commitment to standing up against Sexual Assault. The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/UsrUCduFMdc>.



Sea Year Committee—The Sea Year Committee was established in the summer of 2016 to review and make recommendations for improvements to the Sea Year experience, specifically in terms of preparation, communication, and reintegration. The committee is working to ensure that Midshipmen are adequately prepared to go to sea by reviewing the Academy-wide elements of that preparation. This includes, but is not limited to, training offered during indoctrination, regimental training, and Sea Year lectures. The committee is also investigating available communication methods to ensure Midshipmen have adequate reach back (communication) resources to remain effectively connected to the Academy during Sea Year. The committee is investigating cost effective, satellite-based communication devices that will provide Midshipmen with an immediate and confidential manner to communicate with Academy contacts without compromising their privacy.

Sea Year Reintegration Program—On 7 November 2016, the Academy delivered its first Reintegration Program workshop for Midshipmen returning from sea. These workshops provide Midshipmen with the opportunity to develop, share, and tell their stories as a means of debriefing from their at-sea experience and re-orient to the rigid environment in the Regiment after the unstructured, unregimented environment at sea. The Academy contracted the first delivery of this program with The Homefront Foundation, which provided professional facilitators and executive coaches to guide workshop phases, encourage involvement and promote positive engagement of all participants. “Just like a veteran returning from combat we encourage reflection and authentic connection based on their experience” (The Homefront Foundation Scope of Work, Appendix U). Planned exercises and coaches helped the Midshipmen discover, discuss, develop and share their story in a meaningful way.

After the first successful Reintegration workshop, the Academy developed a group of interdepartmental faculty and staff, led by the Commandant of Midshipmen’s staff and the Sea Year Coordinator, to facilitate future workshops. To date, the Academy has conducted two successful Reintegration workshops and a third is scheduled for 18 March 2017. The Academy is working on a plan to assess the program and its outcomes as part of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (forthcoming). The Academy will continue to invest time and resources in this critical program as it supports the mission and goals of the institution.

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Working Groups – In order to meet the mandate made by Congress in Section 3513 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017, MARAD formed three working groups to look at USMMA climate awareness (Subgroup A), reporting and response (Subgroup B), and Sea Year training (Subgroup C). Subgroups A and B are chaired by labor and industry with Academy representatives as members. Subgroup C is co-chaired by representatives from USMMA and a state academy. Subgroup A will evaluate options for promoting a climate of honor and respect and a culture that is intolerant of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or other inappropriate conduct. It will provide recommendations for promoting a climate of honor and respect and raising awareness of the issues. Subgroup B will assess options that could remove barriers to reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment and other inappropriate conduct while protecting confidentiality and will look at how vessel operators could protect victims against retribution. It will provide recommendations for removing barriers to reporting and

measures that will protect victim confidentiality. Subgroup C will assess the feasibility of changes to the Academy's Sea Year training program and corresponding changes to curricula to improve the prevention of, and response to, incidents of sexual assault during Sea Year. It will provide recommendations for improving existing Academy programs or policies, the potential for creating new programs or policies, and identify any issues with changing Sea Year and the corresponding curricula. Each subgroup will consolidate its recommendations into a written report for Congress in September 2017.

Summary of Compliance with Standard 9

DOT, MARAD, and USMMA remain committed to eliminating sexual assault, sexual harassment, bullying, and retaliation, and to building a climate of inclusion for all. Sea Year remains a core element of the Academy's academic program. The U.S. maritime industry is a key facet of our Nation's economic and national security. The industry and U.S. Merchant Mariners remain key supporters of the Sea Year program, and are critical to the Academy's success. Sea Year provides a unique opportunity for the young men and women of the Academy to serve and train with the industry, and we are taking action to improve the Midshipmen experience to ensure the continuation and success of the Sea Year Program. By improving the safety and climate of respect that all Midshipmen encounter during Sea Year and on campus, the Academy ensures an environment where each Midshipman can learn and achieve academic, leadership, and professional excellence.

CONCLUSION

The faculty, staff and leadership of the United States Merchant Marine Academy worked tirelessly to restore compliance in all Middle States Commission on Higher Education's Standards of Accreditation. The Academy achieved many improvements since the Commission's June 2016 warning, but a significant amount of this work continues, as it should, in the spirit of continuous improvement. Filling key leadership positions in 2016 was an important start to restoring compliance with the MSCHE Standards.

The Academy is working collaboratively with the Maritime Administration to restore the Academy's authority and responsibility for the institutional functions of human resources, procurement, and financial planning and management. The former Secretary of Transportation urged Congress to remove the restrictive language in the Academy's appropriations bills, which will provide access to its approved allotments in a manner that supports effective, efficient, and timely use of financial resources. Congress has already removed some of the restrictions, and DOT, MARAD and the Academy will continue to work with Congress for the lifting of the remaining restrictions.

Embracing the Academy's hybrid government agency—institution of higher education organizational structure, the Office of Academy Financial Management is leading Academy leadership and department heads through new budget and planning processes. These processes will ensure the Academy has the resources it needs to achieve the mission and desired outcomes, and demonstrate resource allocation decisions that are linked directly to goal achievement at the institution and department level.

The Academy's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan will be critical to creating a shared vision for Academy constituents. The Appreciative Inquiry framework for strategic planning using the SOAR methodology will provide the opportunity to create the transformational change the Academy so desperately needs. The Academy requires the ability to think and act strategically in order to improve its organizational capacity and the creation of the next strategic plan is the perfect opportunity to develop those skills across the organization. The collaborative strategic planning process is also the opportunity to create buy-in for strategic goals that clearly align with the Academy's mission and develop actionable strategies and meaningful performance indicators to achieve those goals. The Academy will implement a new Institutional Effectiveness Plan to evaluate the success of the strategic plan in helping the Academy meet departmental and institutional goals. This is an exciting journey that we are ready to start.

As stated in the 2016 Advisory Board Report to the Secretary of Transportation,

The Academy has a long history of graduating accomplished mariners who serve the Nation as leaders. The Academy, with support from MARAD, U.S. DOT, Congress, alumni, the maritime industry, Military Sealift Command, and Midshipmen parents, has made progress in advancing the Academy's management, leadership, curriculum, student support services, culture, faculty development, and infrastructure. Superintendent Helis, MARAD Administrator Jaenichen, and Secretary Foxx should be commended for their consistent and substantive support to advance the Academy's mission. The Academy is on the right path (p. 10).

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