



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

January 6, 2017

Dear USMMA Campus Community:

For more than 70 years, the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) has played, and will continue to play, a critical role in our national security and our economy. It is the training ground for hundreds of future Merchant Marine officers, and the Academy graduates some of the best and brightest our country has to offer. I have tremendous respect for the rigorous curriculum and the high academic standards that Midshipmen must live up to each and every day on campus and during the intensive Sea Year training. The future prospects of each and every young man and woman who enters the Academy is a matter of national interest and personal importance to me.

The acknowledgement and correction of sexual assault and harassment challenges within the Academy is also in our national interest. It is not a sign of weakness or callousness towards the progress of our charges that we confront this issue. It is further a sign that we will insist—all of us—on ensuring that each entering member of the Merchant Marine 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.

Over several weeks, we retained Logistics Management Institute (LMI) to assess this issue objectively and to apply their years of collective experience to carry out a cultural assessment of the USMMA. They conducted a very thorough investigation. They not only spoke with many of you directly, but also with industry representatives and other maritime stakeholders. Today, we release that final report to you, along with my direction to Academy Leadership to immediately accept and implement the recommendations made by LMI.

LMI's findings confirm what our studies and numerous interactions with Midshipmen, most notably by the Defense Manpower Data Center, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and the USMMA Advisory Board, have discovered. While the Academy's culture is grounded in a sense of service, discipline and teamwork—all tremendous strengths—there are also shortcomings that can be corrected with the attention and efforts of the entire community.

Some of these descriptions below may feel familiar to you:

- A fear of being different and singled out;
- That speaking out about sexual harassment and assault will result in retaliation;
- That alcohol fuels a great deal of the negative behaviors on campus and during liberty while serving aboard vessels;
- That leadership at the USMMA can and must be strengthened; and
- That Sea Year plays a unique and possibly defining role in a young Mariner's USMMA life.

The LMI report recommendations provide a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues. While we cannot solve these problems overnight, I am confident that the LMI report and its recommendations give us a way forward. However, the entire campus community must accept this clear and convincing evidence that we do, in fact, have a problem. It is the recognition of such issues that will give rise to our collective resolve to fix them for good.

The Sea Year is of vital importance to each of you. However, it has been made clear to me that, absent greater vigilance, we have been putting too many young people at risk. It has never been our intention to stop your progress; to the contrary, we want all of you to make it. We have had to take steps to ensure that we are doing everything possible to create an environment where everyone feels respected, safe, and empowered. I believe that with the strong support of industry and the specific recommendations from LMI, participation in Sea Year can continue to be an important and unique part of the USMMA curriculum for years to come. Therefore, we are announcing today a plan to restore the Sea Year, and to do so, it will require the cooperation of the entire Merchant Marine Academy community.

I am confident that you will take an active role and join in these efforts and support these recommendations. I am further confident that the USMMA will have a long, illustrious, and even brighter future with your help.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,



Anthony R. Foxx