

**MEETING OF THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY
BOARD OF VISITORS
WEDNESDAY, 16 JULY 2014
U.S. CAPITOL VISITOR'S CENTER**

ATTENDEES:

BOARD OF VISITORS MEMBERS: Sen. John Boozman (AR), Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (NY-4) and Rep. Michael Grimm (NY-11)

STAFF: Staff representing the Senate Commerce Committee, Sen. Roger Wicker (MS), Sen. Mark Warner (VA), Rep. Peter King (NY-2), Rep. Alan Nunnelee (MS-1) and Rep. Steve Israel (NY-3)

MARAD/DOT OFFICIALS: Acting Maritime Administrator Paul Jaenichen, RADM James Helis, USMS (USMMA Superintendent), Brian Blower (Federal Officer), Michael Novak, Rilla Gaither, Angela Stroschein, Christine Gurland and Michael Daley

USMMA ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Sharon van Wyk (Chair), LT Manuel Maddox, USCG (USMMA Graduate 2006) and Mr. Bill Pennella

PURPOSE: Briefing to the Board of Visitors (BOV) on the USMMA Advisory Board's (Board) 2014 Report to Secretary Foxx

The meeting was called to order by Rep. McCarthy at 10:04 a.m.

The meeting commenced with Acting Maritime Administrator Jaenichen stating the purpose of the meeting, followed by an overview of 46 U.S. CODE § 51313, which established the Board as a source of advice for the Superintendent and Maritime Administrator on the course of instruction and management of the Academy. The statute requires the Board to visit the Academy at least once during each academic year.

The Acting Administrator introduced the Advisory Board members, and stated that this was a public meeting under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), and that, as indicated in the Federal Register Notice for the meeting, written statements (comments/questions) were to be submitted in writing. No written statements were received prior to the meeting. Acting Administrator Jaenichen announced that the only agenda item for the meeting would be the Board's 2014 Report to Secretary Foxx report and that questions from the BOV would be received during and/or after the Board's presentation.

Dr. van Wyk explained the key focus for the Board's review was the USMMA 2012-2015 Strategic Plan. The Board was divided into subcommittees focused on the five areas of the Strategic Plan to conduct an assessment of the Academy's implementation and evaluate progress with the established performance measures and goals. The Board toured the facilities, met with

staff, faculty and Midshipmen, and conducted focus groups of more than 60 individuals to obtain information for their assessment. In total, the Board interviewed more than 100 people.

Dr. van Wyk addressed the Board's findings in each of the five areas of Strategic Plan, as outlined in their Report to the Secretary, followed by the Board's recommendations for immediate resolution. Specifically, she highlighted the need to address the following:

1. Provide a means to eliminate Midshipman hunger, especially after hours;
2. Hire a nutritionist to ensure high quality meals;
3. Hold faculty accountable for published office hours;
4. Correct the perceived lack of respect between students and faculty;
5. Re-evaluate Midshipmen leadership development; and
6. Hire a diversity/student life coordinator.

She then addressed the Board's long-term recommendations. LT Maddox provided a report out on the focus groups, addressing specifically the need for leadership development outside the Regiment. Mr. Pennella stated that from the industry's perspective, USMMA graduates are among the best and most well-rounded. However, due to the lack of leadership training the industry requires, maritime companies, including his own; are investing millions of dollars to provide leadership training for the Academy graduates they hire.

Sen. Boozman requested more information about the hunger issue briefed by the Board. Superintendent Helis outlined the normal day of a Midshipmen, which ends around 11:00 p.m. He focused on the time of the evening meal, which ends long before the Midshipman's day. Athletes face more limited choices, as practices overlap with mealtimes and there are less food choices available near the end meal hours. Since Midshipmen are not allowed to take food back to their rooms for later, they are often hungry later in the evening. Rep. McCarthy questioned why there is no after-hours food service, and the Superintendent responded that resources and funding have impacted the Academy's ability to expand hours of the Seafarer cafeteria under the current food service contract. He also stated the capacity and scope of the Academy's requirement is not profitable to a private provider.

Rep. McCarthy stated that funding has always been a problem and that MARAD/Academy needs to ask assistance, and must be transparent and more active in doing so. She stated that she asks her current Midshipmen appointees to come and speak with her new appointees, and the feedback is typically not very good.

Rep. Grimm addressed the current relationship between the Academy and the Alumni Association and Foundation (AAF), stating that it is "horrible and embarrassing." He posed questions with regard to the Academy's alleged refusal of donations from the AAF, the closing of Non-appropriated Fund Instrumentalities (NAFIs), and the issue of office space on campus for the AAF.

Acting Administrator Jaenichen responded, noting that a 2009 General Accountability Office (GAO) report found that many of the NAFIs were mismanaged and had to be shut down. Two have been reopened and efforts are underway to restore others with appropriate oversight and

accountability. Regarding alumni donations, the Acting Administrator said that MARAD/Academy is working closely with the alumni to ensure gifts meet all legal requirements. He also addressed the Academy's plans to use the swing space that was previously occupied by the AAF for their offices. Representative Grimm posed a question regarding the alumni operations of the other Service Academies. The Acting Administrator explained that the alumni building at West Point was not paid for by appropriated funds, and that the Naval Academy's alumni facility is outside the gates, while the AAF's current office space (the Learner House) remains within the Academy Federal boundaries. Mr. Pennella raised the point that a \$2 million endowed chair gift that his company had donated to the Academy through the AAF in the past had been otherwise spent by the AAF. Gabriel Chavez, MARAD Counsel, then explained the Agency's gift acceptance process.

Rep. Grimm inquired about pending AAF FOIA requests, asking whether it would help the relationship if MARAD would respond to the FOIA. Acting Administrator Jaenichen responded that the requests as currently framed are overly broad resulting in the Agency expending unnecessarily expensive staff time and resources. He explained MARAD's actions to date with regard to the 11 FOIA requests, including numerous discussions the MARAD FOIA Office has engaged with the AAF to explain the benefits of narrowing the scope of the FOIA requests. He explained that such narrowing would allow the AAF to obtain the documents they are actually seeking while reducing the cost to the AAF and the burden on MARAD. He also explained MARAD's offer to refund the FOIA fee payments the AAF has made to this point if they were willing to re-scope the FOIA requests, and stated that, to-date, that offer has been rejected. Rep. Grimm proposed a meeting to offer the BOV's assistance on the issue.

A discussion on the proposed changes in the curriculum followed. Admiral Helis addressed the strict constraints on the curriculum because of school year and sea year requirements and the increased USCG credentialing requirements that will be required to meet the International Maritime Organization Standards for Training, Certification and Watchstanding (SCTW) that go into effect on 1 January 2017. Rep. Grimm referred to language in the Report indicating that stakeholders would push back on curriculum changes. Dr. van Wyk explained the Board's rationale for the statement, stating the recommendations are advice, and as such are presented from the perspective of the Board members based on information gathered during their assessment. She also addressed that the accreditation rules require some courses in order to meet minimum criteria (i.e., liberal arts) and mentioned that the Academy only marginally meets some accreditation criteria. Dr. van Wyk noted that the Academy is up for re-accreditation and could be cited by the accreditation Board for failing to meet the minimum requirements. Acting Administrator Jaenichen stated that he recognizes the push back, but the Academy faces other challenges related to the SCTW when they go into effect, and while these requirements are embedded in the curriculum, the resulting inflexibilities require a review of the curriculum. He explained the set-back process for students and impact to the Academy Midshipmen, if the student does not meet these requirements. He noted that while the worst case scenario for other service academies is often a December graduation (or six months), Academy Midshipmen face a up to a two-year set back because of the current academic year structure. Rep. McCarthy expressed agreement that the curriculum needs to change based on new technologies, etc. She inquired if the Midshipmen could get their STCW certifications during sea-year vice from faculty at the Academy. Admiral Helis explained the different training models used by state

maritime academies compared to the USMMA Model and the associated difficulties of certifying STCW on commercial vessels by non-faculty crew members.

Rep. Grimm then inquired if on-line training for liberal arts during sea-year is feasible. Admiral Helis stated they have reviewed the possibility, but there are band-width and hardware issues on various ships and inconsistency in vessel company internet usage policies. He also addressed the impact of additional academic year requirements on the Midshipman's time relative to the sea year projects which have to be complete. LT Maddox elaborated on the Midshipman's schedule during sea year from his personal experience in which he had little access to the internet and that in-coming/outgoing e-mails were screened by the ship's Master.

Admiral Helis then addressed the accreditation issue relative to the Academy's mission statement. He explained that while the leadership aspects are embedded in the training the Midshipmen are receiving, it is not clear how it is being accomplished and there are no metrics for standards of performance or testing nor has Academy established a program to demonstrate and document the leadership performance throughout their time at the Academy. Rep. Grimm stated leadership development must be working within the current structure because the USMMA is graduating great leaders, but he acknowledged that a process is needed to measure success. Acting Administrator Jaenichen provided a comparison of Kings Pointers to other service academy graduates noting that USMMA will always be different due to the sea year requirement. He mentioned that approximately 25 percent of USMMA graduates receive an active duty commission in one of the U.S. Armed Forces, but they start from behind and must "play catch up" in leadership skills which are taught as part of the development programs at other service academies and at Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs at civilian universities and colleges. Acting Administrator Jaenichen stated that the proposed curriculum change will be a two year process, at minimum, and that all changes would be briefed to the BOV; and will require the approval of the USCG and the U.S. Navy as well to ensure it meets all licensing and military requirements to receive a reserve commission in the Navy's Strategic Sealift Officer program. Admiral Helis stated that they must address the gap in the mission statement; which will take time, but must be accomplished to gain improvements. Acting Administrator Jaenichen stated we must ensure the Midshipmen can graduate in a reasonable time – six years is unacceptable. Admiral Helis shared that Midshipmen's schedules are so tight that the recently added vessel security training had to be conducted on a Saturday and Sunday to meet the requirement.

Rep. McCarthy expressed concern about the sexual assault/harassment issue, and inquired how the reporting has changed since the last Report to Congress. The Superintendent stated that in the last six months there have been three reports. Two Midshipmen filed restricted reports for assaults that occurred on campus. One was changed to unrestricted after the victim received off-campus counselling, which led to an investigation and ultimate disenrollment of the assailant. The third report came from a Midshipmen during her sea year training and was investigated by Military Sealift Command. Admiral Helis stated there were four reports during Academic Year 2012-2013, all restricted, and that while the assaults do unfortunately continue, the change is that these incidents are being reported and that the Midshipmen appear to have greater trust in the reporting system and actions taken by the Academy. He expounded on the in-depth training that is being given to the Plebes by the Academy leadership and upper classmen during the Class of

2018 summer indoctrination program. Rep. Grimm acknowledged that sexual assault/harassment is an issue throughout the military, and while challenging it must be addressed.

Acting Administrator Jaenichen talked about the survey and diversity impacts which indicate that achieving 20 percent gender diversity is the point when the U.S. Coast Guard Academy saw a drop in sexual assaults/harassment. None of the other service academies are at that level and the Academy is working to achieve the 20 percent mark. Admiral Helis noted that the Class of 2018 is the most diverse in history while at the same time raising average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores by 30 points. Rep. McCarthy stated she is aware the issue is being addressed and diversity efforts are being met.

Rep. Grimm asked about faculty vacancies. The Superintendent explained the frequent turnover in the licensed faculty, as well as recent and upcoming retirements. He further explained the impact on hiring due to sequestration last year, and the shutdown and Continuing Resolution this Fiscal Year. This cascading sequence of events put the Academy in a soft hiring freeze and has resulted in a hiring backlog. The Acting Administrator stated he has approximately 850 MARAD employees, and explained that the Academy's vacancies have the highest priority, with a particular focus on the Adjunct professors.

In closing, Rep. McCarthy expressed concern with the turnover in the Superintendent's position over the past several years, but noted she hoped RADM Helis planned to be there for a long time. Admiral Helis responded that he intends to remain at the Academy.

The meeting adjourned at 11:21 a.m.