

**STATEMENT OF
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UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY**

**BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT MARINE
INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND SECURITY**

The State of the U.S. Maritime Industry: The Federal Role

March 8, 2016

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Fischer, Ranking Member Booker and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to testify on the state of the U.S. maritime industry and the role of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

The mission of the United States Merchant Marine Academy is 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. Each year the Academy graduates over 200 highly-qualified young women and men committed to serving the Nation as officers in the Armed Forces and the Merchant Marine.

The Academy provides a comprehensive four-year leadership development experience. All graduating midshipmen will receive a Bachelor of Science degree a U.S. Coast Guard-issued Merchant Marine officer's license¹, and a commission in an Active or Reserve Component of one of the Armed Forces. They can meet their service obligation in one of two ways. Twenty to 25 percent will choose to serve five years on Active Duty as an officer in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. The majority of the graduates will sail for five years as a Merchant Marine officer on U.S.-flagged commercial ships or with a Federal agency, normally Military Sealift Command or the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Academy's mission begins with the men and women who pass through its gates in late June to begin their four-year journey. The Merchant Marine Academy has a highly competitive and selective admissions process. Candidates must have a strong academic record and demonstrate superior leadership potential through their participation in co-curricular activities, athletics, and community service. They must meet rigorous medical and physical fitness qualifications for military service. They must also receive a nomination from a Member of Congress or qualify for

¹ To graduate, Midshipmen must pass the U.S. Coast Guard examination for a Merchant Marine officer's license.

one of 40 direct appointments by the Secretary of Transportation by demonstrating qualities deemed to be of special value to the Academy.

Over the past five years the quality and diversity of the incoming classes has improved considerably. Comparing the classes that entered the Academy in 2010 and 2015, we saw the mean score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) improve from 1215 to 1283. The percentage of women admitted rose from 12.9 percent to 19.3 percent. Minorities similarly rose from 15.2 percent to 21.1 percent. Other indicators of the quality of our incoming candidates are class rank, grade point average, and key leadership positions in student government, athletics, and co-curricular and community activities. We are pleased with the progress we are making and expect to see continued improvements in the quality and diversity of future classes.

My top strategic priorities for the Academy are 1) improving infrastructure and facilities, 2) degree reaccreditation, 3) the leadership development program, and 4) prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment. I will address each in some detail.

The Obama Administration has pursued an aggressive capital improvements program for the Academy. We completed the renovation of all six barracks in December 2014. Since 2012, we have also replaced Mallory Pier, which had become unsafe and was deteriorating, with a modern, safe platform for instructional, competitive, and recreational waterfront activities. We upgraded and modernized the food service facilities in the Delano Hall dining facility. We have also undertaken major improvements in the water distribution and sewage systems, and are preparing to upgrade the electrical grid on campus. We will next execute a multi-year modernization and renovation of the academic buildings, to include science laboratories and training simulators. We will then proceed to the Academy's athletic and administrative buildings.

We are fully committed to the safety and security of our campus, our midshipmen who live there, and our dedicated staff and faculty. To that end, we have undertaken major enhancements to our physical security program. Since 2012, we have installed surveillance cameras and blue light emergency call boxes in key locations on campus. We added electronic card access to all entrances to the barracks where our Midshipmen live. In 2013, we increased the size of the Academy's contract guard force. Our contract security personnel are now armed and trained to respond to a broad range of contingencies, including an active shooter and reports of sexual assault. Our new, manned command center integrates the security systems and provides immediate connections to local emergency services and law enforcement. Our emergency operations planning committee is reviewing and updating our response plans. We conducted active shooter training for faculty and staff in January, and will hold similar training for all midshipmen, staff, and faculty this spring. We are also planning exercises with local law enforcement. Funding for additional enhancements, including more surveillance systems and

improved vehicle access control, is requested in the President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) accredits the Academy's academic degrees. We are presently in the decennial degree reaccreditation process. Accreditation is based in part on a comprehensive evaluation including a very detailed institutional self-study report. We initiated the self-study in 2013, with over one hundred staff, faculty, and Midshipmen serving on various committees. We completed the self-study on time and submitted it to MSCHE for review earlier this year. The accreditation team, appointed by MSCHE, is comprised of educators and experts who ensure the Academy is meeting the standards of excellence established by MSCHE. The team, led by West Point's Dean of Academics, Brigadier General Tim Trainor, will visit the Academy in April 2016 to conduct their on-site assessment and provide us their initial findings. We anticipate MSCHE issuing its final report and reaccrediting our degree programs in the summer of 2016. The report will include MSCHE's recommendations for actions to improve the quality of our programs, which will drive our strategic planning for 2017 and beyond.

Leadership development is at the forefront of the Academy experience. Everything we do should contribute to the personal and professional growth of the Midshipmen so they graduate prepared to be lifelong leaders for our Nation in the Merchant Marine, the Armed Forces, and government. Starting with the class of 2020, two formal academic courses in leadership will be added to the core curriculum. The Dean of Academics and the faculty are making adjustments to the curriculum to ensure these courses are not additive to an already demanding academic load. We presently offer an elective in leadership which is well-subscribed. The Commandant of Midshipmen is revising the Regimental training program to dedicate more time to leadership development. His intent is to develop a more progressive program of seminars targeted at the experience and needs of each class. He is also building additional leadership training through exercises into the summer training program for the incoming class, which should be beneficial to both the new Midshipmen and the senior midshipmen conducting the training. I am proud of how the Commandant's staff, faculty, and athletics department have embraced the challenge of more explicitly addressing the development of the leadership skills of our Midshipmen. We believe this will enhance the quality of the Academy's graduates and better inspire them to lives of selfless service as leaders for our Nation.

Sexual assault and sexual harassment are unacceptable behaviors and have no place at any institution of higher education, especially one committed to developing our Nation's future leaders. Sexual assault and sexual harassment continue to be a concern at the Academy. We are committed to eliminating this behavior on our campus and, until we reach that goal, improving the reporting rate and taking appropriate action in each reported case. The Commandant in his vision for the Regiment has clearly defined assaults on personal dignity, integrity, and leadership

as harmful not only to individuals, but also to the Academy and detrimental to mission accomplishment. The steps we have taken since 2012 to address sexual assault and harassment are included in our annual reports to Congress. We welcomed evaluations of our programs by the Department of Transportation (DOT) Inspector General in 2013 and 2014, which provided a review of our programs and provided useful recommendations, all of which we have implemented.

To oversee and guide the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program, DOT established a Senior SAPR Steering Committee with members of senior staff from the Secretary of Transportation's office, the Maritime Administration (MARAD), and the Academy. At the Academy, we established a multi-disciplinary Sexual Assault Review Board (SARB), meeting monthly, to provide executive oversight and procedural guidance for the SAPR program by reviewing ways to improve processes, system accountability and victim access to quality services. The SARB has recently drafted Standard Operating Procedures for investigating reports of sexual assault and appropriately maintaining these reports and records.

Our full-time Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) resides on the Academy, and is available to Midshipmen 24/7 through a victim hotline. Victims are provided with information and referrals, and assistance in obtaining any necessary medical or mental health treatment at the academy or appropriate local community resource and/or victim advocacy agency. Victims may make a confidential (restricted) report² through the SARC, Health Clinic counseling staff, Chaplain, or trained and designated staff and faculty victim advocates. The Academy works closely with a local victim advocacy agency to provide an additional confidential reporting option. A victim may also make an unrestricted report which results in the initiation of both criminal and administrative investigations. Depending on the outcome of the investigations, the Academy may take administrative disciplinary action regardless of whether criminal charges are ultimately filed.

The SARC, working with the Superintendent, Commandant and Dean of Academics, has significantly improved training across the Academy aimed at the prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Faculty and staff receive mandatory training annually. Incoming Midshipmen receive training in the first three weeks in small group settings (20-25 midshipmen per training) covering the topics of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, stalking and bystander intervention. For the Class of 2019, we increased training to three hours from one

² A confidential report, also known as a restricted report, allows Midshipmen who are sexual assault victims to disclose, on a confidential basis, the details of their assault to specifically identified individuals at the Academy and receive medical treatment and counseling at a location of the victim's choice (on or off-campus), without triggering the official investigative process. Midshipmen who initially elect to make a restricted report can, at any time after their initial restricted report, decide to pursue unrestricted reporting, which will result in the initiation of criminal and administrative investigatory proceedings

hour in the year prior. The SARC and Commandant continue to provide quarterly training throughout each Midshipman's academic career in both small and large group settings. The SARC and the Department of Professional Development and Career Services provide special training sessions prior to departure for Sea Year (sophomores spend four months at sea and juniors spend eight months at sea). Training focuses on where to seek help or assistance (Ship's Master, Designated Person Ashore), situational awareness, risk reduction, and bystander intervention. This year, the Academy adopted the Green Dot bystander intervention program, which teaches students to identify volatile situations in which there could be the possibility of sexual violence and to defuse those situations through diversion or distraction. The SARB recently decided to increase our training on sexual assault and proper conduct for Midshipmen prior to their departure for sea training this summer, in response to reports that this is a higher risk period for Midshipmen. While we have implemented this wide variety of important training, education, reporting, and security mechanisms, much work remains to be done to achieve a climate of where sexual assault and sexual harassment are not tolerated and this behavior is eliminated. The USMMA recognizes this important on-going responsibility and will work towards continuous improvement.

To give our Midshipmen alternatives to behaviors that could put them at risk, we have improved our campus climate. We hired a new Student Activities Director to organize activities after school and during the weekend to keep students occupied and energized. Activities have included trips to New York City cultural attractions, movie marathons, Sea Story Sunday, open mic nights, and a Winter Carnival featuring an iceless skating rink.

Since 2012, our surveys tell us Midshipmen have a much better awareness and understanding of sexual assault and sexual harassment and appreciate the commitment of everyone from the Secretary of Transportation through MARAD, the Academy's senior leadership, and Midshipmen Regimental officers to eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment from the Academy. We are extremely disappointed that we are not seeing a decrease in incidents in the survey results. I want to assure the Committee that I am personally committed to solving this problem. My experience in assisting victims of sexual assault dates back to the 1990s when I served in the Army as a battalion commander. I know from working firsthand with victims the immeasurable, sometimes lifelong harm these crimes inflict and how they undermine unit readiness and cohesion.

Sexual assault and sexual harassment are fundamentally at odds with our values as a Nation and our obligation as leaders to live by, model, and expand those values. They undermine our ability to accomplish our mission. The U. S. Merchant Marine Academy, a Federal service academy, should be setting the example for the Nation in eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus.

Again, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I appreciate your interest and continued support for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.