



# USMMA Newsletter July 2016

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United States Department of Transportation



U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

## In the News

July 2016

### Message from Rear Admiral Helis

Dear Midshipmen, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Parents and Friends:

In the weeks since our last newsletter we celebrated achievements, marked beginnings, and took action on important challenges.

The proud Class of 2016 achieved a stellar [licensing](#) pass rate, and we celebrated their [graduation](#) with honors as you will read in the articles below. We then rapidly followed graduation with [Indoc](#), welcoming the incoming Class of 2020. This class is one of the Academy's most diverse and has the highest percentage of women in our history.

We celebrated [CAPT Douglas Hard '62](#) and his many achievements as he retired after 42 years of dedicated service to the Academy, and 54 years of service to our Nation. CAPT Hard set the gold standard for service. We can't thank him enough for all he contributed to the Academy and to the education of the thousands of Midshipmen he taught. Together with the faculty, staff, and Midshipmen, I wish him fair winds and following seas.

As we aim to continuously improve the USMMA education experience, we took action on important challenges. Sea Year is and will remain a core element of the Academy's academic program. It is because the program is so important that together with the Department of Transportation and Maritime Administration (MARAD) we stood the program down to take decisive steps to ensure midshipmen can work and train in an environment that is both safe and respectful.

We are now restarting the program using federal assets such as Military Sealift Command (MSC) and MARAD vessels. We are engaging with the industry to institute necessary measures, and are making every effort for an on-time graduation for the affected students. We will continue to communicate with our Midshipmen and other stakeholders as we move ahead, and will post further updates on our [web page](#).

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) recently issued their accreditation determination, and while they found the Academy's academic foundation is sound, and in many ways exemplary, they issued a warning with recommendations regarding two broad areas separate from academics: combatting sexual harassment and assault, [particularly during Sea Year](#), and governance of the USMMA.

We appreciate MSCHE's candid, thoughtful, and thorough work. We are committed to the process of continued improvement to accomplish the Academy's mission. I am confident that USMMA will meet the requirements and recommendations.

The Academy remains accredited while we work with MSCHE to address the requirements and recommendations, and ensure the highest caliber education for the Academy's Midshipmen. The Academy has two years to reach compliance. The accreditation documents, which are best read in context to appreciate how the Academy intends to address each of the issues, are available at on our [web page](#).

We look forward to our Academic Convocation this week, which marks the formal beginning of the 2016-2017 Academic Year, followed by Acceptance Day, August 5th. Please be sure to check our [calendar page](#) for Parents' Weekend, Coast Guard Weekend and all the other Athletics, Academic and Regimental events ahead. I hope to see many of our alumni, parents and friends of the Academy there.

*Rear Admiral James A. Helis*