

**MEETING OF THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY  
BOARD OF VISITORS  
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy  
Kings Point, NY  
Crabtree Room, Schuyler Otis Bland Library  
14 December 2018**

**ATTENDEES**

BOARD OF VISITORS (BOV) MEMBERS: Representative Tom Suozzi, Representative Peter King, RADM Dee Mewborne, Mr. Gary Gilbert, Mr. Joseph Cox

MARITIME ADMINISTRATION (MARAD) OFFICIALS: Mark H. Buzby, RADM, USN (Ret) Maritime Administrator; Joachim “Jack” Buono, RADM, U.S. Maritime Service (USMS), Superintendent, US Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA or Academy); Susan Dunlap, RDML USMS, Deputy Superintendent, USMMA; Mikel Stroud, Captain USMS, USMMA Commandant of Midshipmen; John Ballard, PhD., USMMA Academic Dean; Mr. Scott Davies, USMMA (acting) Executive Officer; Gene Albert, Captain USMS, USMMA Department Head Office of Professional Development and Career Services; Mr. Mike Toop, USMMA (acting) Department Head Physical Education and Athletics; Mr. Brian Blower, MARAD – USMMA Liaison and BOV Designated Federal Officer (DFO).

**PURPOSE**

As required by law, the BOV met at USMMA to Introduce the new Academy Superintendent and Academic Dean/Provost; brief Members on the Critical Infrastructure Plan, the 5-Year Strategic Plan, the infrastructure spending plan and ongoing capital improvements; update Members on the general state of the Academy and the Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment program progress.

**CHAIRMAN’S OPENING REMARKS**

Senator Fischer designated Representative Suozzi to chair the Meeting. Rep Suozzi opened the meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance and thanking the members for their continued participation and support of the Board. He thanked the Maritime Administrator for his energy and support of the Academy.

**CONGRESSMAN KING’S OPENING REMARKS**

Rep. King stated that he was pleased to be able to attend and thanked Rep. Suozzi for his continued interest in the Board and willingness to serve as the Chairman.

**SUPERINTENDENT’S OPENING REMARKS**

RADM. Buono noted this was his first meeting as Superintendent, but he attended the last meeting in D.C. and was looking forward to a productive meeting today.

**MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR’S OPENING REMARKS**

Maritime Administrator Buzby welcomed everyone to meeting and thanked the members for their ongoing interest. He thanked Rep. Suozzi for introducing a resolution in Congress recognizing the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of USMMA. RADM Buzby praised the Superintendent for taking ownership of the 5-Year Strategic Plan and his leadership in operationalizing the plan.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A motion was entered and seconded to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2018 BOV meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

RADM Buono noted that he has been the Superintended for about 30 days. He believes the Academy has a sound mission which transforms young men and women into leaders of exemplary character in 3 ½ years. The Academy uses four pillars of education to accomplish this transformation: 1. Academics 2. Regimental System 3. Athletics 4. Sea Year.

The Superintendent stated that his immediate priorities are 1. Addressing Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment 2. Accreditation 3. Critical Infrastructure Improvements

**Strategic Priority #1** (Educational Program) - Dean Ballard stated that he is motivated by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation report to conduct a holistic review of the academic programs including graduation requirements, leadership development and sea year. The review is expected to identify gaps, opportunities and areas of increased efficiency beginning with IT systems and needs.

**Sea Year Overview** – Captain Albert stated that at any time, about 250 M/N are at sea. All have been issued satellite communication devices which have been tested all over the world. M/N are required to report to the Academy on a weekly basis.

**Q:** Currently only 23 of the 65 shipping companies employing cadets prior to the Sea Year Stand Down (aprox 118 vessels) are accepting USMMA cadets for sea training. Is this enough? Why don't more companies accept cadets?

**A:** There are various reasons companies choose not to take USMMA cadets including pay, oversight and resources.

**Q:** Do some of these companies take cadets from State Maritime Academies?

**A:** Yes. MARAD has adjusted the Shipboard Climate Compliance evaluation criteria to encourage additional companies to take USMMA cadets.

**Q:** What is the problem?

**A:** We have already enlisted the easy companies.

**Q:** Are we asking too much?

**A:** The criteria is regularly reviewed to assess M/N safety vs. ease of compliance.

**Q:** Is the Navy picking up the slack in billets?

**A:** Yes, primarily MSC.

**Q:** What are the 3 biggest academic challenges?

**A:** 1. Technology 2. Building renovations 3. Time management (by M/N)

**Q:** How does the estimated 29% of the class of 2018 planning to go Active Duty compare to previous years?

**A:** Generally, 20-30% of graduates go on to Active Duty. The percentage is reflective of the strength of industry (available sailing jobs).

**A:** All graduates have an obligation to sail commercially or go Active Duty.

**Q:** What does the BOV need to do to help?

**A:** Level the playing field by supporting MSP, Jones Act and promoting a strong industry which requires cargo.

**Q:** Do we need a merchant marine?

A: This is a strategic requirement and we are about to have a shortage of qualified mariners to support that mission.

### **FACULTY SPOTLIGHT**

David Gilmartin, J.D., Associate Professor of Maritime Business provided insight to the types of courses he teaches including finance, accounting, logistics, marine insurance and chartering. He noted that these courses are future looking in order to provide a career path toward the board room as opposed to the war room which is part of the regimental objective.

**Strategic Priority #2** (Institutional Culture) – RADM Buono stated that the other 5 strategic priorities are structured, while priority number 2 is more amorphous, but equally important, so it must be properly resourced. Cultural change takes time, but with proper resourcing, Superintendent Buono hopes to see significant progress within 3 years.

### **SAPR/SA/SH UPDATE**

RDML Dunlap reported on SA/SH progress that has been made. Of the recommendations made by the OIG, 2 have been closed, closure has been requested for 3 more, 3 have long lead times, and extensions have been requested for the remaining 2 which require programmatic changes.

The SAPR office is now fully staffed with a supervisor, an SSO officer, a victim's Advocate and an attorney.

The NDAA requirements are complete except for three items: 1. M/N disciplinary program training which is mostly complete 2. Commandant's report 3. Combating retaliation plan which is being addressed by a working group.

RADM Buzby commended the staff on the progress made noting they are well into prevention and well ahead of many other institutions. He indicated the M/N have "taken ownership" of the issue and believe in the need to change the mindset.

### **REGIMENTAL UPDATE**

Commandant Stroud reported that the M/N are striving to make the Academy better. They are given "swim lanes" and provided freedom within the boundaries to address issues such as review of 1. M/N regulations 2. Uniform regulations 3. Room regulations 4. Training handbooks for each class. This has resulted in increased trust in the administration and provided a safer learning environment in which it is OK to make mistakes

Capt. Stroud indicated that proper metrics and documentation do not exist to evaluate leadership, but the Commandant's staff is working with Academy personnel and others to improve the process. M/N are reminded that they represent not only themselves, but the Academy with their actions. They are expected to hold themselves, their peers and underclassmen accountable.

Fraternization continues to be a problem. Recent progress has been made, but is difficult in this environment. The goal is to eliminate fraternization completely, but challenges remain particularly with favoritism in dating relationships between 1/c and 4/c.

Discussion was held to clarify the nature of fraternization and the extent to which is a problem. Non-fraternization is essential to maintaining proper discipline and order on board ships.

Alcohol misuse continues to be a problem and the source of many disciplinary matters. The Commandant is focused on teaching proper use as opposed to abuse.

## **MIDSHIPMAN SPOTLIGHT**

M/N Jake Wallace, 1/c, Regimental Commander, highlighted improvements and changes he has witnessed during his 4 yrs at the Academy. M/N Wallace specifically mentioned the change in culture, the Sea Year Stand down and reintegration into the regiment following Sea Year. He stated: 1. There is better organization now with clearer expectations from the M/N 2. The biggest change is in the expectation of personal accountability 3. There is much better communication with the Regiment than in the past 4. Over the past several years, there was significant personnel churn, but there is greater stability now.

**Q:** How is today different than when you were a Plebe?

**A:** Regulations are better documented and expectations better defined than in the past.

**Q:** Do the “lanes” (the Commandant mentioned) make sense?

**A:** Yes, but there is still some pushback (from M/N).

**Strategic Priority #3** (Infrastructure) – Mr. Davies reported that MARAD has an MOU with federal highways to do CIP design, engineering and contracts. Step one is to update the master plan, cost estimates and the timeline. FHWA will provide Q&A and project management.

Current CIP project status: 1. Samuels hall – in design 2. Crown in shield/Cressy piers - moving forward 3. Seawall rebuild – defining requirements 4. Security upgrades - ongoing 5. Gibbs Hall/O’Hara pool/chapel repairs in planning stages.

**Q:** who has seen the master plan? Is there a problem with security that requires priority over fixing leaks?

**A:** Security and repairs have different funding sources.

**Q:** Do you have enough money?

**A:** We need to fix 20 years’ worth of deferred maintenance on a prioritized basis

**Q:** Are there still air quality problems?

**A:** We made changes to ventilation systems and added CO monitors to correct the issues.

**Strategic Priority #4** (Governance, Leadership, Administration) – RDLM Dunlap reported that IAW the findings of the MSCHE, most critical personnel vacancies have been filled. She is currently updating policies, procedures and Superintendent Instructions. There is a solid action plan which will take about nine months to implement.

**Strategic Priority #5** (Communications and Relationships) – USMMA needs to develop an ongoing communications plan which consolidates efforts with measurable, repeatable messaging that leverages industry relationships. Quick “wins:” include: 1. A Facebook presence providing timely updates on matters of interest to stakeholders 2. Website refresh with a new look, content and items of interest. These efforts should target alumni, industry and local Long Island audiences.

Rep Suozzi recommend the Academy “blow your own horn” when there are good news stories to tell.

**Strategic Priority #6** (Athletics) – RADM Buono stated that all midshipmen have an athletic/physical component to their education, and that athletics and wellness are important lifetime activities. Competition leads to success on and off the field by providing leadership opportunities and teaching life lessons.

**Q:** The trimester system has destroyed the sailing team, how has it impacted other athletic teams?

**A:** Sea Year will always have impact on some sports.

**Q:** What about recruitment?

**A:** The Superintendent is looking at returning to a quarter system over a three-year period and what the impacts would be.

### **MEMBER COMMENT**

Mr., Cox stated that a ship takes on character of the master as the senior officer and USMMA currently has a good leader ship team.

Mr. Gilbert indicated that the current BOV meeting structure works for the Board, but there is not enough participation of Members and more need to be done to improve participation.

Rep. Suozzi noted that he has been working to try to recruit new Members recently.

RADM Mewborne stated that he will be departing as Commander MSC in the summer of this year. He has enjoyed the past 2 ½ years during which time he has come to admire USMMA grads. He believes the Academy is on a “journey of excellence” with a good plan to achieve that goal.

He indicated: 1. Current mariner training is not sufficient for hostile action. There is no training for MCON, zigzag etc. so there is a need to revisit the concepts for both current sailors and students at USMMA. 2. USMMA should be a center of excellence which will require a commitment to achieve that goal. 3. There is a need for greater awareness of the strategic tie between USMMA and national security areas of focus.

### **AUDIENCE REMARKS**

The Chairman offered an opportunity for remarks from the audience.

Ms. Livy and Mr. Arntzen from the AAF highlighted the Foundation’s public relations campaign to promote the maritime industry.

There being no further questions or discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1120.

Submitted by:

Brian Blower

Designated Federal Officer to the Board of Visitors

202 366-2765

[Brian.Blower@DoT.gov](mailto:Brian.Blower@DoT.gov)

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I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

USMMA BOV Chair

These minutes will be formally considered by the Board at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.