



SUPERINTENDENT
UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY
KINGS POINT, NEW YORK 11024-1699

April 26, 2017

Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski
President, Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street, 2nd Floor West
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Doctor Sibolski,

We appreciate the time and attention that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Evaluation Team has devoted to its evaluation of the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). We concur with the Team's report. I am grateful for the Team's recognition of the efforts of the entire USMMA community in addressing the deficiencies identified by the Commission in 2016. While we are pleased with the progress we have made, we recognize there is still much work to be done. We are working diligently to meet the Commission's expectations for compliance with Standard 2 and Requirement of Affiliation 7, both of which relate to institutional planning, to achieve full reaccreditation. We acknowledge the need to *demonstrate resource allocation decisions that are directly linked to mission and goal achievement at the institutional and unit level, and document further development and implementation of an organized and sustained institutional assessment process, including evidence that assessment results are used to inform decision-making.*

USMMA is currently actively working on budget processes for three years—Fiscal Years (FY) 2017, 2018, and 2019. The Academy is preparing spend plans for the remainder of the FY17 allocations (to begin after 28 April 2017 when the current Continuing Resolution expires) based on the guidance provided in its FY 2017 budget request. USMMA's Financial Working Group (FWG) recently sent the proposed FY18 budget to the Superintendent's Cabinet for approval and subsequent submission to the Maritime Administration (MARAD). The FWG made its resource allocation recommendations guided by my priorities.

A new bottom-up budget planning process is underway for the FY19 budget process as USMMA implements its new Strategy, Execution and Assessment (SEA) process in full. The initial FY19 budget proposal is due to MARAD in the summer of 2017. Although the Academy will not have a new strategic plan in place before the initial FY19 budget formulation process, departments will use current institutional goals to inform the budget process. There will be adequate time between submission of the initial FY19 budget and completion of the President's Budget for FY19 to make adjustments in the event that new strategic goals or priorities vary significantly from the current institutional goals.

We also acknowledge the recommendations made by the 2016 and 2017 Visiting Teams and will continue to work until all of those recommendations are fulfilled. We will fully implement the

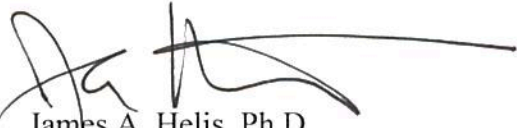
new budget planning process with the FY19 budget process now underway. We will also continue to vigorously pursue timely access to institutional resources.

The Academy continues to move forward in hiring key positions, particularly the Academic Dean and Commandant of Midshipmen. We have advertised for both positions and are in the selection process for each. We have made a selection for the Director of Civil Rights/Diversity Officer who is scheduled to begin work 1 May. One of two Sexual Assault Victim Advocate/Prevention Educators will be on board in June and we are currently reviewing applications for the Sexual Assault Prevention Program Manager and the second Victim Advocate/Prevention Educator. The Presidential hiring freeze was lifted in April, so we are able to move forward with recruitment for filling other vacancies in accordance with our established hiring priorities.

Finally, we will continue our focus on the safety and wellbeing of our Midshipmen. We will ensure the Sea Year compliance program is effective by identifying key performance measures and implementing assessment processes that provide information to inform program improvement. We are working to implement recommendations from the Logistics Management Institute Cultural Assessment and enhance sexual assault and harassment education and prevention at USMMA. Our efforts continue on the Culture Campaign, which is still on schedule for full roll-out in June 2017.

I wish to thank the evaluation team again for their efforts. Their report provides us with the feedback we need to strengthen our institution and ensure that USMMA can better accomplish its mission of educating and graduating leaders of exemplary character who will serve the Nation's interests in peace and war.

Sincerely,



James A. Helis, Ph.D.
Rear Admiral, U.S. Maritime Service
Superintendent, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy