

# DOT, MARAD Release Assessment of US Merchant Marine Academy



Midshipmen and plebe candidates stand in formation at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point in 2018. The Plebe candidates are congressionally nominated and are starting indoctrination, a rigorous, 20-day regimen of academic, military, and physical training. *U.S. NAVY*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Maritime Administration (MARAD) released Nov. 24 a new report titled, “Organizational Assessment of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy: A Path Forward” and an accompanying implementation plan prepared by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA).

“USMMA students are remarkable leaders committed to serving the nation and supporting positive change,” said Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley. “They deserve a modern, safe, and inclusive learning environment where they have the training and resources that will prepare them to succeed in the U.S. merchant marine and in our armed forces. We acknowledge, and have been working to address, the many urgent issues raised by NAPA’s report and to put USMMA on a path to modernization.”

NAPA’s assessment affirms that USMMA faces “longstanding systemic issues” across almost all areas of its operations, including educational programs; facilities maintenance and capital management; sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response, including during the Sea Year; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and internal and external governance.

The assessment further warns that, “Because of the magnitude and fundamental nature of the challenges USMMA faces, the greatest risk to USMMA’s future is doing nothing to

significantly address its challenges and the causes of those challenges.”

NAPA’s report also makes clear that these challenges have worsened over many years and that under-resourcing – particularly unmet personnel needs – makes many of these challenges more difficult to resolve.

### **The Way Forward**

Since the start of the new administration, USDOT and MARAD leaders have been focused on the most urgent issues facing the USMMA. USDOT and MARAD will establish a task force, as recommended by the NAPA report, to develop recommendations that help chart the Academy’s future.

USDOT and MARAD also have numerous efforts underway to address challenges identified in the NAPA report. For example, USDOT and MARAD have announced a temporary pause in Sea Year training and are developing new requirements for commercial vessels that carry cadets to protect the safety, security, and well-being of cadets.

In alignment with the reports’ recommendation that USMMA should engage a facility executive to direct and coordinate maintenance and capital efforts, USDOT has detailed a senior federal official to direct ongoing efforts to address the Academy’s maintenance backlog and lead capital efforts.

In addition, leadership is working to finalize and implement a campus-wide maintenance contract.

Consistent with the NAPA recommendation that USMMA accelerate investments in information technology, the USDOT Office of Chief Information Officer will work to identify options to upgrade information technology systems.

USDOT and MARAD remain committed to ensuring training and resources are available to graduate licensed merchant marine

officers who can meet the national security, economic, and transportation needs of the nation. The recommendations provided by NAPA will assist the administration in supporting a campus where midshipmen learn to become exemplary leaders in a safe, secure, and modern environment.

For more information, the assessment and implementation plan are available for [download](#).

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy was founded in 1956 with a mission to educate and graduate leaders to serve the national security, marine transportation, and economic needs of the United States as licensed merchant marine officers and commissioned officers in the Armed Forces. USMMA provides students with a degree and credentials that allow them to embark on a career in public service.

The NAPA assessment was directed by the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act to provide an analysis of the operations of the USMMA and offer modernization recommendations for implementation consideration.