

Dear Friends of the U.S. Naval Academy,

Greetings from Annapolis! Katie and I have enjoyed the privilege of serving this historic institution for one year now—a year that has gone by so quickly. We have had the pleasure of overseeing great successes during this time. Now that we have wished the Class of 2008 fair winds and following seas, I would like to take a moment to provide you with a snapshot of today's Naval Academy, including my assessment of how we are moving forward to execute our mission and vision.

Last summer my leadership team and I rolled out three themes to guide the Naval Academy: we are a nation at war, we are all here to develop midshipmen, and the Naval Academy is the face of the Navy. Those themes continue to guide us now.

We are still a nation at war. The 258 surface warfare officers that we commissioned last month are joining the Fleet where 43 percent of all ships are currently on deployment. Now more than ever, our graduates must be ready on day one of commissioned service to lead Sailors and Marines at the tip of the spear.

To better prepare our midshipmen for this challenge we made policy changes to directly support my second theme: that everyone at the Naval Academy is here to develop midshipmen for the privilege of serving. We focused on two priorities--professionalism and leadership development, and incorporated the following changes:

- We provided the opportunity to practice leadership every day with particular emphasis on the First Class. Given the heavy load of moral, mental, and physical requirements for every midshipman, we maximized training opportunities by establishing more structure within the Brigade's schedule. Specifically this included three formations a day and mandatory attendance during meals. Increasing midshipmen time together allowed leaders to engage with their subordinates, evaluate their military appearance, inquire about their studies and athletics, and set an example.
- We focused on a schedule similar to what midshipmen will see in the Fleet. Training during the day (class attendance for midshipmen), a time for physical fitness in the afternoon, and study time at night. With all midshipmen on a relatively similar schedule, they can further support their units by training together in the afternoon and studying together at night.
- We emphasized the importance of attending class, reducing absences by 30% from the previous academic year.
- We enforced accountability by having squad leaders participate in Academic and Conduct Boards for their subordinates.
- To highlight the leadership responsibility of the First Class, we have changed their working uniform to khakis, aligning with the Fleet and ensuring they stand out as the example for the Brigade.

- We reduced the amount of time First Class could be away from their leadership and education responsibility by reducing the amount of weekday liberty. In the end, though, the Class of 2008 averaged 68 days of leave and 110 days of off-yard liberty for their last year—a level well beyond what they will ever see again as a commissioned officer.

Leading change and managing expectations are always difficult, but the Class of 2008 continually improved their leadership skills as they grasped the opportunities to practice leadership. Class leaders like Mitchell Scholar Victoria Moore, who graduated first in her class as a varsity athlete and the Spring Color Company Commander, and Zerbin Singleton, Spring 2008 Brigade Commander, community servant, and football standout, embraced these changes and led their fellow midshipmen in adapting. I look forward to watching the Class of 2009 learn these valuable lessons from the example of their predecessors in the upcoming year.

Every midshipman should be proud of their role in executing my third theme: the Brigade is the face of the Navy. Last year's Brigade did an outstanding job representing the thousands of Sailors and Marines who were forward deployed. When the world watched the Annapolis Conference, senior leaders addressed the Brigade at Forrestal lectures, and American citizens observed full dress parades, they saw America's finest young leaders performing with teamwork and discipline.

In community service projects, the Midshipmen Action Group, with leadership from Midshipman Kimberly Cook, showed the local community that Naval Academy midshipmen are compassionate young people ready to selflessly serve others. There are many more examples of midshipmen-led events around the Yard, including the Naval Academy Leadership Conference and Foreign Affairs Conference, which continue to enhance our reputation as the face of the Navy.

Part of our increased professionalism was attributable to new policies aligning our Academy with the larger Navy and Marine Corps. Today we are focused on ensuring our midshipmen experience the Fleet for summer training. Last summer only 65% of the Class of 2008 interacted with Sailors and Marines in the Fleet. This summer, we are executing a plan for nearly 100% of the Class of 2009 to engage with our Navy and Marine Corps. Further alignment included the elevated role of the Command Master Chief, Master Chief Vonn Banks, and the enhanced role of Company Senior Enlisted Advisors. I firmly believe that the more our midshipmen interact with enlisted Sailors, Marines, and their Senior Enlisted, the better prepared they will be to lead those same volunteers in the Fleet.

We have also been working on bringing the practices of the Fleet to the Naval Academy. Our Fleet and Family Support Center, with the help of Master Chief Banks worked to bring Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom Veterans to football games, to recognize our Individual Augmentees preparing to deploy overseas, and to establish a Family Readiness Group. Today's junior officers must be prepared to lead this diverse, all-volunteer force that has never been tested in continuous combat for so long. Our Sailors are skilled, professional, and educated with families and many other options beyond military service. Midshipmen today are seeing first hand that family readiness affects mission readiness.

I believe that a Superintendent can only truly effect one or two major institutional changes during his tour at the Naval Academy. Beyond executing our mission, my number one focus as Superintendent is to increase the Brigade's diversity to be more reflective of America and the 47% diverse Fleet and Marine enlisted force our graduates will be leading. In January we established a Naval Academy Diversity Office to align efforts around the Yard and liaison with community leaders. That office has been collaborating with Admissions on events like the Admissions Outreach Conference and Wesley Brown Field House dedication to publicize the opportunities our Academy can offer young people of all backgrounds.

The Class of 2012 is set to become our most diverse class yet with 340 minorities projected to take the Oath of Office on 2 July. That is up from 291 in the Class of 2011. To prepare for the Class of 2013 and beyond we have also expanded our Naval Academy Summer Programs. This year Summer Seminar, our program for rising high school seniors, has grown by nearly 20% to accommodate more students from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented areas of the country. We are also hosting a summer program in San Diego, California for those students who cannot come to the East Coast to see the Academy.

As I travel around the country I am frequently asked questions on various Academy policies. Enclosed you will find a list of common concerns and their current policy. Hopefully this will clarify any misinformation you might have received.

We have built a great team for the upcoming year. Our newest member is the new Commandant, CAPT Matt Klunder, who comes to us with impressive Fleet experience and credentials. Welcome aboard to CAPT Klunder and his family. I am also happy to report our Athletic Director, Chet Gladchuk, has agreed to stay with us so we can continue to "expect to win."

Last year was a historic one for the Naval Academy:

- We accomplished our mission, not only by commissioning 785 Ensigns and 233 Second Lieutenants from the Class of 2008, but by meeting or exceeding the specific personnel requirements of each warfare community.
- We re-energized the Stockdale Center, giving it a new director and re-centering its focus on the intended mission: “to promote and enhance the ethical development of current and future military leaders through education, research, and reflection.”
- The Class of 2008 finished near the top of all American universities with respect to its large number of notable scholarship winners (Rhodes, Marshall, Mitchell, Gates, and Cambridge).
- We remained at the top of the nation in graduation rates of our student athletes while still winning a historic nine Patriot League titles and beating Notre Dame in football. Six of the top ten graduates of 2008 were varsity student-athletes.
- Finally, we dedicated three new sports facilities (Halsey Field House Squash Court Extension, Brigade Sports Complex, and the Wesley Brown Field House) and began renovation of our Academy museum.

I also want to thank alumni and friends of the Naval Academy for their continued support with their time, their talents and their generous gifts, all of which have contributed significantly to the great success we have enjoyed in the past year.

We will continue to push ourselves and our Brigade to achieve excellence in everything we do every day. America’s Sailors and Marines deserve nothing less.

Go Navy!
Jeff Fowler
VADM USN
Superintendent

Policy Clarification

One of the purposes of this letter is to clarify policies that may have been misunderstood by groups who do not have access to all of the facts. Below is a comprehensive list of policy clarifications.

Sea Trials as the culmination of Plebe year

A decade ago, the Naval Academy modified two important events signifying the successful end of Plebe year. Sea Trials and Herndon occur sequentially. The first Sea Trials began in 1998 with the Class of 2001. Initiated under ADM Larson, it is intended to be a performance-based rite of passage testing every plebe's teamwork and endurance, much like the Marine Corps' Crucible and Navy Great Lakes Battle stations. It is the culmination of Plebe year. Herndon remains the final ceremony, although its execution has varied significantly from year to year.

Extracurricular Activities (ECA)

Most midshipmen excelled academically and in numerous other extracurricular activities while attending high school. Our technically-focused curriculum combined with a challenging leadership development program put a much higher burden on each midshipman than most have ever experienced. To help guide ECA involvement, we have developed a tiered system of activities. Some of the groups, like the Dolphin Society or Flying Club, are directly supportive to our mission. These are highly encouraged. Other activities with little relation to officer development must be tempered with military duties and academic performance. Midshipmen are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities as their free time and performance allows.

Music

Music continues to be an important part of our Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) program. The Drum and Bugle Corps; Glee Club and other choirs, including the Gospel Choir; Masqueraders; Halloween Organ Concert; Messiah Concert; Distinguished Artist Series, and other music opportunities are good recruiting tools for the Naval Academy and provide cultural education for our midshipmen. As with other ECA's, involvement in musical activities must be balanced with getting a Bachelor of Science Degree and leadership development. Some of our venues for these groups have changed to better serve the Academy's needs. We want our recruiting efforts to be applied where we need them most and with due consideration of our midshipmen's time.

I have approved the Distinguished Artist Series program for next year. The specific events are international and important opportunities for our midshipmen to expand their cultural knowledge and appreciation. This program is designed and funded for midshipman development, so I have reset some of the policies, seating, and timing to better serve the midshipmen. Some alumni and friends in town may see changes that put them secondary to midshipmen—that is intentional to keep the program aligned to its original intent.

Sailing

Sailing is an important part of our Naval heritage and training. All midshipmen receive sailing indoctrination as Plebes, and I firmly believe that our varsity teams should be national competitors. These goals are similar to what most of you experienced when you were here. Unfortunately though, whenever we desire to add something to our program, another requirement must be removed. In order for our midshipmen to gain more experience in the Fleet and Marine Corps prior to service assignment and commissioning, I have removed the requirement to have every midshipman qualify to be a skipper of a sailboat or YP. Midshipmen who are interested and also have free time and satisfactory performance are encouraged to seek these qualifications.

Food Service

We are excited to have the Brigade back together in King Hall, but there are still more challenges ahead. Our galley needs to be upgraded to modern standards and our authorized ration per day per midshipmen is inadequate to meet the current cost of food for young, athletic adults. Our Navy staff is working with us to correct both issues.

Attrition

Our attrition rate is at record lows, despite the change in policies this year. Is this because the Academy's program has gotten easier? No. It is a reflection of the quality of midshipmen we currently admit. Every year we receive nine to ten times the number of applications that we can accept. We will always have a small percentage of midshipmen who attrite for a wide variety of reasons, but our Navy and Marine Corps would be well served if all our midshipmen could be successfully commissioned.

Female midshipmen

On one trip a gentleman asked me if we were aiming to change brigade demographics to reflect 40 percent women. The answer is no. From my days in recruiting I can tell you that typically about half as many women are interested as men in serving in the military. Given that and the fact that girls are outperforming boys in high school, qualified female interest in the Naval Academy settles out at about 25% women and 75% men. Today's all volunteer force Navy is currently at about 17 % women—the Naval Academy is at about 21%. Our admissions board selects the best candidates to be midshipmen without regard for gender.

ROTC and USNA common application

Those of you with recent Academy experience will remember the painstaking application process here. I do not need the application to be a screening tool. That only works to screen out those students who are unfamiliar with the Navy. We are making it easier for future Naval Officers to apply for ROTC and USNA by working a common application form. A common form allows us to share the names of those who were just below the tough selection criteria to see if the other source might have a better match. We have some Congressional districts that are underrepresented. If an NROTC applicant can also apply here, we may desire that future midshipman and can offer an appointment.