



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
121 BLAKE ROAD
ANNAPOLIS MARYLAND 21402-1300

December 29, 2020

Dear Naval Academy Families, Sponsors, and Friends,

Happy holidays and greetings from the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA)! I hope you and your families are finding peace and joy in this holiday season, even while our nation continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, I would like to thank you for your overwhelming support of our midshipmen and the Naval Academy over the past semester. We recently completed one of the most challenging academic terms in Naval Academy history. Our goal for the Fall 2020 term was in-person education. Despite the COVID-19 environment, we aimed to maximize the moral, mental, and physical components vital to the USNA educational model. It was not easy, and we know that these changes and COVID-19 protocols were particularly difficult for the Brigade of Midshipmen. However, I am also proud of the leadership, resilience, and determination that the Brigade displayed throughout the fall, overcoming many challenges. These are the exact character traits we want to instill in our future military leaders. The end result is we met our mission and completed the Fall 2020 term together, in person, achieving what few academic institutions were able to do in the challenging COVID-19 environment.

Second, I wanted to update you on our plans for the spring semester. Fortunately, as the COVID-19 vaccines are rolled out nationally, we look forward to the near future when we are able to return to more routine operations. However, at least for the next few months, we must maintain the same COVID-19 protocols and social distancing on the Yard, to include preserving space internal to Bancroft Hall for quarantine and isolation. During the fall semester we were able to offset the loss of living space by leasing dormitory rooms at St. John's College. Unfortunately, these dorms are not available to us next semester, and thus we must consider other creative solutions in order to "de-densify" Bancroft Hall.

Therefore, one of our options that we have selected to explore is to permit a select group of approximately 200 upper class midshipmen to live with family, friends, or their sponsors and commute to the Naval Academy for part or all of the Spring 2021 semester. We currently have over 100+ midshipmen who have a home of record within commuting distance of the Naval Academy, and we are also fortunate to have many supportive families and friends in the local area willing to consider hosting a midshipman this spring.

I fully understand that this is a substantial undertaking – even for close family – and this is on top of all the sacrifices that you currently make to support our midshipmen, but I wanted to formally present the information for your careful consideration. I sincerely thank all of you who have already volunteered. There are also still opportunities available if interested.

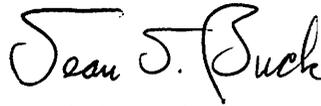
Commuting Midshipmen Concept of Operations:

- Midshipman participation in this program is voluntary. Selected 1/C and 2/C midshipmen must be approved by their chain of command and must have a verified residence with family, friends, or sponsors within 35 miles of the Naval Academy. *(If you can provide a bed and an internet connection for your midshipman, we will provide the rest.)*
- Midshipmen must have access to a vehicle or means to commute. Dedicated parking will be allocated on the Yard for these individuals.
- The Naval Academy will provide three meals a day for commuting midshipmen and all other support services will remain available (e.g. laundry, dry cleaning, etc). Midshipmen will not receive financial reimbursement for lodging, meals, or commuting costs.
- Specific rules and regulations for commuting midshipmen are being refined, but midshipmen should expect to spend a normal day at USNA up to and including the evening meal.
- We understand that by providing living space for a midshipman, you may have concerns over increasing your number of household contacts and increasing your risk of exposure to COVID-19. The Naval Academy will provide the following **COVID testing and protocols to mitigate exposure:**
 - All midshipmen returning for the spring semester will receive a PCR test upon return from Winter Break followed by a mandatory 10-day restriction of movement (quarantine) followed by a repeat PCR test. Commuting midshipmen will complete this restriction of movement period at their family, friend, or sponsors' home.
 - 15% of the Brigade will be tested each week to rapidly identify, isolate, and treat those who are positive (this is 5-10 times the testing rate currently being conducted in Anne Arundel County). This methodology was used during the fall semester, and was very successful in keeping our infection rate low. Our average positivity rate during the semester among midshipmen was <1%, far lower than the positivity rate in Anne Arundel County (which varied from ~4-10%).
 - In addition to the 15% of the Brigade that is tested each week, we will test 100% of all commuting midshipmen every week to offer an additional level of surveillance for both our midshipmen and your families.
 - All midshipmen who test positive for COVID-19, are symptomatic, and/or are designated as close contacts will be moved to the Quarantine/Isolation wing of Bancroft Hall until released by our Brigade Medical Unit.
 - Careful application and enforcement of CDC mandated COVID-19 cleaning and social distancing protocols, to include during dining and in the classroom, as well as restrictions of group sizes.

- If you are supporting a midshipman this spring, or require additional information, please contact [REDACTED]

In closing, please accept my sincere thanks for all that you do every day to support our midshipmen, as well as your willingness to open your homes. These are truly unprecedented times, but I am confident that we will be successful again in the spring semester due to the strength of our Naval Academy family. It is vital that we continue to graduate the finest Navy and Marine Corps Officers into the naval service – on time and ready to lead. I am proud to stand side by side with all of you as Naval Academy teammates. Joanne and I wish every one of you the happiest New Year in 2021.

Sincerely,



S. S. BUCK
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
Superintendent