

A Report by a Panel of the
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Assessment of Coast Guard Academy Admissions Processes



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March 10, 2023

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About the Academy

The National Academy of Public Administration is an independent, nonprofit, and non-partisan organization established in 1967 and chartered by Congress in 1984. It provides expert advice to government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. To carry out this mission, the Academy draws on the knowledge and experience of its over 950 Fellows—including former cabinet officers, Members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state legislators, as well as prominent scholars, career public administrators, and nonprofit and business executives. The Academy helps public institutions address their most critical governance and management challenges through in-depth studies and analyses, advisory services and technical assistance, congressional testimony, forums and conferences, and online stakeholder engagement. Learn more about the Academy and its work at www.NAPAwash.org.

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Foreword

The United States Coast Guard (USCG or Service) has a mission to ensure our Nation's maritime safety, security, and stewardship. With operating units underway in the broadest array of maritime theaters, including polar regions, inland waterways of the United States, and virtually everywhere in between, this Service focuses on a variety of maritime missions. These include protecting those in danger on the waters, drug interdiction, environmental protection, and port and waterway safety.

The U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA or the Academy), located in New London, CT, has been a major source of USCG officers since its founding in 1876. This report focuses on the Academy's admissions process, with attention to how it can successfully recruit and retain an increasingly diverse Corps of Cadets now and in the future. It offers actionable recommendations that can support USCGA's efforts to attract and train a highly skilled USCG officer corps reflecting racial and gender characteristics that ever more closely match the population it serves.

This report follows a National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) [study on cultural competence](#) at the USCGA issued in February 2022. Both reports result from a congressional charge found in the Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act (part of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, of FY 2021).

As a congressionally chartered, independent, non-partisan, and non-profit organization with nearly 1,000 distinguished Fellows, NAPA has a unique ability to bring nationally recognized public administration experts together to help government agencies address challenges. Overseen by a five-member Panel of NAPA Fellows and supported by a professional Study Team, this report concludes two years of work that has been actively supported by the Department of Homeland Security, the USCG, and its Academy. This report also provides practical examples of how to address two of our Grand Challenges in Public Administration: [Foster Social Equity](#) and [Advance Interests in a Changing Global Context](#). For this sustained and generous collaboration from all levels of these organizations, we offer earnest appreciation.

We also commend and thank representatives of other service academies for actively contributing to this research. Finally, this report has benefited substantially from input offered by many researchers and practitioners in the field of college admissions, as well as from congressional staff. For Academy leaders, I trust this report will contribute to a sustained successful future for this service to our Nation and the World. It is an honorable, complex, and essential mission.

Teresa W. Gerton
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Academy of Public Administration

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	i
List of Figures.....	i
Acronyms and Abbreviations	ii
Executive Summary	5
Chapter 1: Project Background.....	9
Scope of Work.....	9
Methodology.....	11
Report Structure.....	11
Chapter 2: USCGA Background.....	13
USCGA Structure	13
USCGA’s Admissions Division.....	14
Admissions Process Overview.....	14
Diversity of Corps of Cadets.....	15
Applications, Yield, and Selectivity	17
Chapter 3: Current State and 10–15-year Outlook of the Candidate Pool	19
Admissions affect the future of USCG.....	19
The Admissions Director Position Is Both Complex and Demanding	20
Demographics Are Shifting.....	20
A Relatively Small Part of the Population Is Eligible or Interested in Military Service	26
Fewer Young Adults See the Value of a College Education	28
USCGA Faces a Competitive Environment	28
Conclusion.....	29
Chapter 4: Congressional Nomination Requirement.....	31
Background of the Congressional Nomination Process	31
Past Legislative Action	33
Possible Benefits of Introducing a Congressional Nomination Process for the USCGA	34
Arguments Opposing a Congressional Nomination Process	35
Discussion of Introducing a Congressional Nomination Process to the Coast Guard Academy.....	37
Conclusion on the Question to Require a Congressional Nomination Process	40
Chapter 5: Organizational Issues.....	43
Admissions Director Position Description and its History.....	43

Admissions Directors at Other Service Academies	43
Advantages of Having a Military Officer Serve as Admissions Director	44
Advantages of Having a Civilian Serve as Admissions Director	44
Considerations for Selecting Admissions Division Leaders	45
Current Admissions Division Staffing	49
Admissions Programming	51
Force Multipliers	52
Chapter 6: Other Actions	55
Strategy	55
Marketing	59
Considering a Shared Application Portal for Service Academies	60
Chapter 7: Conclusion	63
Appendices	67
Appendix A: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021	67
Appendix B: Panel and Study Team Member Biographies	69
Appendix C: List of Interviewees	72
Appendix D: The Admissions Process at Federal Service Academies	74
Appendix E: Admissions Director Position Description	76

List of Tables

Table 1. Population (Under 18 and 18-24) and Postsecondary Enrollment Changes from 2010 to 2019.....	21
Table 2. U.S. Resident Population Aged 18-24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 and 2019.....	23
Table 3. Number of U.S. Residents Enrolled in College, by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 and 2020.....	24

List of Figures

Figure 1. USCGA Mission Statement.....	9
Figure 2. 2020 Fall Enrollment by Sex at Federal Service Academies and All U.S. Colleges.....	16
Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity of Total Enrollment, Federal Service Academies, and the U.S. College-Age Population, 2021	17
Figure 4. USCGA Applications Rejected, Declined, and Accepted, Classes of 2016-2025	18
Figure 5. USCGA Yield and Selectivity Rates, Classes of 2016-2025	18
Figure 6. Number of High School Graduates, 1988 - 2037 (projected)	22
Figure 7. Enrollment Status of 18-24-year-olds and Age Distribution of Students Enrolled in Postsecondary Education in the United States, 2019	22
Figure 8. Fall enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, percentage distribution by race/ethnicity, 2020 and 2010	25
Figure 9. College Enrollment Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 and 2020.....	26
Figure 10. Non-Congressional Nominating Authorities for DoD Service Academies	32
Figure 11. USCGA Corps of Cadets Racial and Ethnic Diversity (2012-2021).....	38
Figure 12. AACRAO Competencies for Higher Education Professionals.....	46
Figure 13. AACRAO Proficiencies for Admissions Professionals.....	48
Figure 14. Admissions Officer Territories Map.....	50
Figure 15. USCGA Compelling Interests	55
Figure 16. Components of a Strategic Enrollment Management and Annual Enrollment Plans	57

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
AACRAO	American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
AD	Admissions Director
AIAN	American Indian and Alaska Native
AIM	Academy Introductory Mission
AMOT	Academy Minority Outreach Team
BOT	Board of Trustees
CGA	United States Coast Guard Academy
CGRC	Coast Guard Recruiting Command
CNP	Congressional nomination process
DCMS-DPR	Deputy for Personnel Readiness to the Deputy Commandant for Mission Support
DCO	Direct Commission Officer
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDMERB	Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board
FY	Fiscal year
HEGIS	Higher Education General Information Survey
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
JAMRS	Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies
NAPA	National Academy of Public Administration
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NHPI	Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management

PANORAMA Act	Public Accountability on Nominations Offered, resulting in Admissions to Military Academies Act of 2020
PCTS	Permanent Commissioned Teaching Staff
RISE	Respect & Inclusion Summer Experience
RMF	Rotating Military Faculty
ROI	Return on investment
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SEM	Strategic Enrollment Management
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
STEP	Science Technology Engineering Program
U.S. Code	United States Code
USAFA	United States Air Force Academy
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USCGA	United States Coast Guard Academy
USMA	United States Military Academy
USMMA	United States Merchant Marine Academy
USNA	United States Naval Academy

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Executive Summary

This report focuses on the vital work of the Admissions Division of the U. S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA or Academy) to recruit and retain a diverse Corps of Cadets. This report follows a National Academy of Public Administration study on cultural competence issued in February 2022. Both reports result from a congressional mandate found in the Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act (part of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021).

USCGA is unequivocally a key to the future of the U.S. Coast Guard (the Coast Guard or USCG). To that end, this report is both timely and fundamental to a Service with a compelling set of operational missions.¹ While the other military services also rely on extensive Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs at universities and colleges throughout the United States, virtually all USCG officers prepare for their roles in New London, CT. According to the USCG, the largest group of USCG officers earn their commissions by completing the USCGA undergraduate program (43 percent in FY 23). The other pathways are Officer Candidate School (OCS) and the Direct Commission Officer (DCO) course, which, respectively, contributed 31 percent and 26 percent of officers in FY 23.

Three essential questions define the structure of the project and the report. First, would a congressional nomination requirement serve to increase diversity in the Corps of Cadets? Second, should a civilian head the Academy's Admissions Division? Third, what actions should be taken to increase gender, race, ethnic, and geographic diversity among the Corps of Cadets? Answering these questions includes examining the four other federal service academies' admissions processes for insight.²

The overriding conclusion of this report is that there is presently no "burning platform" at the USCGA Admissions Division. It is operationally sound. Recent demographic data on the USCGA Corps of Cadets, as outlined in Chapter 2, show that USCGA has achieved as much or more diversity as the other academies. Overall, the Admissions Division maintains programs and reasonably allocates resources. Furthermore, it has served USCGA and USCG well, given its available resources and the growing challenges of recruiting cadets. As such, the Admissions Division embarks on a future with both a competent platform and operational discipline that can provide the basis for preparing itself for the years ahead.

However, this does not mean that USCGA and USCG can expect similar results in the future. As discussed in Chapter 3, USCGA, the other academies, and other institutions of higher education in the United States face a future of rising negative trends that include: a dwindling college candidate pool, significantly lower penchant of college-age students to seek a career in military

¹ This report benefitted from unfettered access to senior USCG officers and civilian personnel at both USCGA and USCG, along with senior leaders from the DHS. The USCGA Board of Trustees received regular updates and provided essential support to this work. Leaders of Admissions Divisions from all the other federal service academies were similarly avid in their help to inform this report. Finally, there are dozens of professionals in higher education across a broad span of institutions who contributed insights and data to enrich this work.

² U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

service, fewer candidates who qualify without medical waivers, and increasingly competitive financial packages offered by most universities and colleges, especially to students of color interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. These trends are impossible to turn back. As such, the USCGA must consider how to work with USCG to pivot toward a “new normal.”

As a starting point, Congress directed this study to address the following question: how could a congressional nomination requirement impact Academy diversity among the student body and the ability of the USCG to carry out its primary duties? As affirmed in Chapter 4, there is no evidence that a congressional nomination requirement would demonstrably contribute to a more diverse USCGA Corps of Cadets. Furthermore, there is no evidence that such a requirement would enhance the USCG’s ability to carry out its primary duties. Compared to its peer group of federal service academies with the congressional nomination requirement (as shown in Chapter 2), the USCGA Corps of Cadets is already as diverse or even more so. In addition, should this requirement be imposed, the Admissions Division would have to divert scarce resources away from direct recruitment activities to handle the additional workload of coordinating with nominating offices and reviewing nominations. Moreover, USCGA, with incoming class sizes of approximately 270 cadets (about one-fourth the size of the three other federal military service academies), is not well-suited to benefit from receiving nominations from up to 535 members of Congress each year. After all, space constraints on campus and Service needs limit the number of cadets in each class. Thus, one of this report’s six recommendations is to not take action to introduce a congressional nomination requirement.

While this report commends the USCGA’s leaders and Admissions Division for positioning the Academy for success in recent years, this report’s essential message and contribution are to offer six actionable recommendations (separate from the recommendation on a congressional nomination requirement) that merit immediate review, planning, and execution. Recognizing that USCG leaders hold authority to approve certain policies, allocate resources, and maintain overall oversight of the Academy, some recommendations are directed to the Coast Guard while others are directed to the Academy. Implementing these recommendations as an integrated whole, the Academy can, over time, put itself in a strong position to attract the highest quality future USCG leaders. Chapters 5 and 6 present these action recommendations.

Regarding the military or civilian status of the Admissions Director (a second issue raised by Congress), recommendations in Chapter 5 call on the USCG to consider the two most senior Admissions Division positions jointly. As a team, the Admissions Director and the Deputy Admissions Director should have the requisite professional skills and experience in the field of admissions in higher education to adeptly and successfully lead a recruitment and retention effort that builds an officer corps that reflects the people the USCG serves.

While the Admissions Division has successfully increased and sustained diversity, there are several opportunities for improvement. As discussed in Chapter 6, opportunities exist to enhance strategy and marketing efforts. Furthermore, there may be benefits for USCGA to collaborate with other service academies to explore how a shared application portal, focused exclusively on those students interested in attending a service academy, might advance these goals.

DHS, USCG, and Academy leaders demonstrated a unified response to act on recommendations in the previous National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) report (February 2022)³ evaluating Academy cultural competence among faculty, staff, and cadets. This response suggests USCG leaders will continue to place the requisite importance on enhancing cadet diversity with tools found in this report. This view is further bolstered by the receptivity Academy leaders and Board of Trustees members have consistently demonstrated with NAPA researchers during discussions about draft versions of this work.

The USCGA is positioned to advance its lofty mission, as outlined in the Service’s Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2023,⁴ to recruit and retain a highly skilled USCG officer corps that reflects the diverse nation it serves. This effort will require ever greater professional focus, adept communication strategies, and commitment to navigate the competitive challenges that appear on the near-and longer-term horizon. Recommendations in this report call for: increased targeted resource investments to remain competitive in successfully recruiting STEM-qualified students from underrepresented minority populations; employing an Admissions Director and Deputy Director who, taken together, possess specific professional competencies and proficiencies required in the college admissions field; and more rigorous strategic focus on coordinated enrollment management. These changes are necessary considering reliable demographic and social research data describing adverse changes in the national college candidate pool in the next decade and beyond. Notwithstanding the Academy’s sound performance in developing a diverse Corps of Cadets in recent years, implementing this report’s recommendations will be critical to staying within reach of its diversity aims. Without the changes outlined in this report, greater effort alone will likely lead to a substandard result.

The mission is compelling. With willing leaders, adequate resources, and a focused strategy, the future of this Service is on a stronger footing to address an increasingly challenging future. The USCG motto says it best: *Semper Paratus*.⁵

The recommendations found in this report are listed below.

Chapter 4: Congressional Nomination Process

- 4.1** The Coast Guard should not take action to adopt a congressional nomination requirement.

Chapter 5: Organizational Issues

- 5.1** The Coast Guard should:
- allow the Admissions Director (AD) to remain in the position beyond a standard tour length; and
 - formalize training and preparation requirements for a military officer who serves in one of the AD leadership roles.

³ *An Assessment of Cultural Competence at the United States Coast Guard Academy*, National Academy of Public Administration, February 2022, <https://napawash.org/academy-studies/u-s-coast-guard-academy-cultural-competence-assessment>.

⁴ *Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2023*, U.S. Coast Guard, <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Portals/10/CG-1/diversity/DIAP/Diversity-and-Inclusion-Action-Plan.pdf?ver=2020-06-25-153724-670>.

⁵ *Semper Paratus* is Latin for “Always Ready.”

- 5.2** The Coast Guard Academy should:
- ensure that the AD and Deputy AD, combined, attain the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) competencies and proficiencies; and
 - change the position descriptions to ensure they cover the AACRAO core competencies and proficiencies.
- 5.3** The Coast Guard should expand the Academy’s staff to strengthen nationwide outreach efforts, particularly for underrepresented populations.
-

Chapter 6: Other Actions

- 6.1** The Coast Guard Academy should develop and follow a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.
- 6.2** The Coast Guard should enhance the Academy’s marketing capabilities to reach its target audiences.
- 6.3** In consultation with one another, the federal service academies should consider developing a shared application portal to expand academies’ visibility and streamline the application process.

Chapter 1: Project Background

The U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA or the Academy) has been a major source of officers for the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG or Service) since its founding in 1876. With a cadet corps totaling 1,072 (fall 2022), the campus lies on 103 acres along the Thames River in New London, CT. Its mission is shown in Figure 1 below.⁶

Figure 1. USCGA Mission Statement

“To graduate young men and women with sound bodies, stout hearts and alert minds, with a liking for the sea and its lore, and with that high sense of honor, loyalty and obedience which goes with trained initiative and leadership; well-grounded in seamanship, the sciences and amenities, and strong in the resolve to be worthy of the traditions of commissioned officers in the United States Coast Guard in the service of their country and humanity.”

US Coast Guard Academy Mission Statement

The subject of this report is the USCGA’s admissions process. The USCG maintains a goal of building an officer corps that reflects the diverse nation it serves.⁷ The USCGA aims to recruit and graduate a Corps of Cadets that will supply an officer corps with this demographic profile over time. This goal—to look like the United States — is a focus of this report, centered on USCGA’s admissions process.

Established in 1790, the USCG has a long history of service to the nation and the world. The total active-duty personnel is approximately 49,500, comprised of 40,800 military and 8,800 civilian personnel.⁸ The USCG is a Federal law enforcement agency, a regulatory body, a first responder, a member of the U.S. Intelligence Community, and at all times, a military service and branch of the Armed Forces of the United States. Its focus is to “ensure our Nation’s maritime safety, security, and stewardship.”⁹ The USCG has 11 operational missions. They are: migrant interdiction; drug interdiction; living marine resources; other law enforcement; search and rescue; marine environmental protection; ports, waterways, and coastal security; marine safety; aids navigation; ice operations; and defense readiness.

Scope of Work

The impetus for this report is a congressional mandate found in the Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act (part of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, of FY 2021). Section 8272 and Section 8274 required the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to

⁶ “Mission,” United States Coast Guard Academy, December 29, 2022. <https://uscga.edu/mission>.

⁷ *Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2023*, U.S. Coast Guard, <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Portals/10/CG-1/diversity/DIAP/Diversity-and-Inclusion-Action-Plan.pdf?ver=2020-06-25-153724-670>.

⁸ “Workforce,” United States Coast Guard, December 29, 2022. <https://www.uscg.mil/About/Workforce/>

⁹ “Missions,” United States Coast Guard, Historian's Office, December 29, 2022. <https://www.history.uscg.mil/Home/Missions/>.

contract with the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) for an assessment of USCGA's admissions process (the entire NDAA text outlining this task is in Appendix A).

The legislation required NAPA to conduct two discrete one-year studies focusing on the USCGA. The first study, completed in February 2022, assessed the USCGA's cultural competency.¹⁰

The second year's work—the admissions process assessment—has the following research focuses in the scope of work:

- An assessment of the process USCGA uses to identify candidates for recruitment, recruit applicants, assist applicants in the application process, evaluate applicants, and make admissions decisions.
- A discussion of the consideration during the admissions process of diversity, including race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background,¹¹ and geographic origin.
- An overview of the admissions processes at other Federal service academies, including a discussion of diversity and analysis of how the congressional nomination requirement impacts those processes and overall student demographics.
- A determination regarding how a congressional nomination requirement for USCGA admissions could impact diversity among the Corps of Cadets and the ability of the USCG to carry out the Service's primary duties effectively.
- An assessment of whether the Admissions Office should be headed by a civilian with significant relevant higher education recruitment experience.
- Recommendations for improving USCGA admissions processes.

The work was conducted over one year and received exceptional support from DHS, the USCG, the Academy, and many other stakeholders, including four other service academies (U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy). Appendix C contains information on the interviewees.

This report was prepared by a five-member Panel of NAPA Fellows supported by a professional NAPA Study Team (hereafter, Study Team; see Appendix B for biographical information on the Panel and Study Team). Four of five individuals serving on the project Panel also served on the first year's project on cultural competence. Similarly, three of the four members of the project Study Team were involved in the first year's project. As such, this project benefited from both Panel and Study Team consistency. This consistency led to enhanced interpersonal engagement between Panel and Study Team; an accumulated depth of knowledge by the NAPA Panel and Study Team members about the USCGA acquired over the two years of work covering both tasks; and a healthy, professional, trusting relationship fostered over time between the NAPA Panel and Study Team and leaders of the Academy, USCG, and DHS.

¹⁰ *An Assessment of Cultural Competence at the United States Coast Guard Academy*, National Academy of Public Administration, February 2022, <https://napawash.org/academy-studies/u-s-coast-guard-academy-cultural-competence-assessment>.

¹¹ Religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background are not tracked by the USCGA Admissions Division. For that reason, these demographic categories are not discussed in this report because the data are not available.

Methodology

The Study Team used documentary sources, best practices reviews, and interviews to perform this review. There were four major research focus areas: (1) how the Academy organizes and deploys its personnel and budgetary resources to attract and retain a diverse Corps of Cadets; (2) characteristics of the future (10-15 years in the future) pool of high school graduates who might apply to the Academy; (3) engagement with other military academies, similar in many respects to the USCGA, to identify practices that USCGA might apply; and (4) contacts with a variety of public and private colleges, universities, and associations to identify best practices. The Panel also enjoyed several meetings with senior leaders of DHS, USCG, USCGA, the USCGA Board of Trustees, and associations affiliated with the Academy, such as the Loy Leadership Institute and the USCGA Alumni Association.

The Study Team received ready and thorough support from the Academy staff. This report benefits from the many hours of interviews conducted with the Admissions Division Director and his team. In addition, access to other senior Academy leaders, thanks to the extensive support rendered by USCGA Superintendent Rear Admiral William Kelly, enhanced this work. The Study Team was welcomed on campus for a three-day site visit three months into the project. During those days, the Study Team met with the USCGA's Senior Leadership Team, leaders and staff of the Admissions Division, faculty, and the USCGA Alumni Association. Furthermore, the Project Director attended three Academy Board of Trustees meetings to present project updates, providing opportunities for extensive discussions about this work. The Study Team also met with the congressional requesters of this study.

The Study Team conducted all interviews on a "not for attribution" basis. About 35 personnel at the Academy met with the Study Team. In addition, the Study Team met with more than 25 other admissions professionals outside of the USCGA. Finally, interviews were conducted with four newly commissioned ensigns who assisted the Admissions Division with various tasks.

The Study Team reviewed relevant documents provided by the USCGA and USCG. These included admissions planning documents, marketing reports, and budgetary data, among others. Furthermore, the Study Team performed a best practices assessment of strategic enrollment systems and practices and requisite skills and abilities important in the profession of college admissions management.

Finally, the Study Team received strong support and assistance from senior officials representing the U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, U.S. Military Academy, and U.S. Naval Academy. Their participation underscores the importance of the collaborative relationship among these unique and vital institutions.

Report Structure

The report is organized into seven chapters. In addition to the introductory chapter, the report contains the following six chapters.

Chapter 2 offers important contextual information on the Coast Guard and the Academy to support the report's analysis and recommendations on enhancing the admissions process.

Chapter 3 presents information on the current and forecasted future state of the pool of potential applicants to the USCGA, other military service academies, and other institutions of higher learning. It also describes growing recruitment challenges.

Chapter 4 addresses the question of whether to introduce a congressional nomination process.

Chapter 5 speaks to issues connected with the USCGA Admissions Division's senior leadership structure, including whether to have a civilian Admissions Director.

Chapter 6 provides recommendations on how the Admissions Division might adopt new practices to enhance prospects for success in recruiting and retaining a diverse Corps of Cadets.

Chapter 7 summarizes key points in the report and offers final remarks.

Chapter 2: USCGA Background

This chapter provides background on the Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) and its Admissions Division as context for the research and recommendations presented in later chapters. Sections outline the structure of the USCGA, with emphasis on the Admissions Division, describe the admissions process, and provide a high-level overview of the admissions trend of USCGA and the other service academies.

USCGA Structure

The USCGA is one of five federal service Academies. As the head of the institution, the Superintendent oversees all USCGA operations and is responsible for implementing the strategic guidance provided by the Commandant and USCGA's Board of Trustees. Internally, the Superintendent works closely with and receives advice from the USCGA Senior Leadership Team (SLT), a small group of USCGA officials who create policies and procedures. The Assistant Superintendent, second in command at USCGA, is responsible for administrative oversight and operations.

During their time at the academy, cadets participate in a 200-week program consisting of rigorous academic, military, and leadership development training. Cadets can earn a Bachelor of Science degree in one of nine majors. In addition to the cadets from virtually all 50 states and U.S. territories, each class includes a small number of international students. Cadets are organized into eight companies that span all four class years.

USCGA faculty teach in a variety of disciplines in twelve departments in the Academic Division and the Department of Health and Physical Education in the Athletic Division. The Provost oversees three schools: the School of Engineering and Cyber Systems; the School of Science, Mathematics and the Humanities; and the School of Leadership and Management. The Director of Athletics oversees the sixth department, Health and Physical Education. The faculty of the seventh department, Professional Maritime Studies, report to the Commandant of Cadets. In addition to teaching and advising cadets, faculty can serve in many other capacities, including assistant coaches, club advisors, and academic administrators. Many faculty members actively engage in research, faculty governance, internal committees, and promoting inclusive pedagogical practices. The faculty consists of civilian (term, temporary, tenure-track, tenured, non-appropriated fund, joint duty, and auxiliary), uniformed service (NOAA), and military (Permanent Commissioned Teaching Staff (PCTS), Rotating Military Faculty (RMF), and Reserve).

The USCGA workforce also consists of civilian, commissioned, and enlisted staff members who work in organizational units across the campus. These administrative units include the Admissions Division, Office of Inclusion and Diversity, the Mission Support Division, the Academics Division, the Commandant of Cadets Division, the Athletics Division, the legal office, chaplain services, and others.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) serves as the administrative body providing oversight of the USCGA. It has several important roles: advising the Superintendent, advocating, engaging strategic

planning and alignment, and ensuring cadets', faculty's, and staff's safety and well-being. Voting members include active-duty, civilian USCG employees, Coast Guard Reserve, and Coast Guard Auxiliary members. In recent years, non-voting special representatives have included representatives from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and academics and leaders from other higher education institutions. The Deputy for Personnel Readiness to the Deputy Commandant for Mission Support (DCMS-DPR) chairs the BOT. In this way, USCG leaders exercise authorities to deliberate and approve certain policies, allocate resources, and provide strategic oversight of the Academy.

USCGA's Admissions Division

Twenty-two staff members currently support the Admissions Director (AD), including a Deputy AD and five admissions officers. The Admissions Division's annual recruitment plan and the Superintendent's guidance memo establish the yearly recruitment goals of the USCGA admission office. The Admissions Division hosts on-campus and virtual admissions events, leads recruitment efforts, reviews applications, maintains admissions-related partnerships, and guides prospective cadets through the application process.

The Admissions Division operates year-round with a budget that fluctuates annually. The admissions budget pays for the USCGA's prep school partnerships and admissions initiatives, including but not limited to USCGA visitations, affinity group invitationals, summer programming, and the Academy Minority Outreach Team. These efforts are further amplified by force multipliers—formal and informal partnerships with groups and individuals that assist in expanding the Admissions Division's recruitment efforts. Chapter 5 discusses these initiatives and partnerships.

Admissions Process Overview

The admissions process is a multi-phase process. Unlike the other federal service academies, USCGA does not require a congressional nomination for its applications. The method of obtaining a congressional nomination varies according to congressional district and state and may require a separate application for the applicant's Senator or Congressperson to review. An application to the other service academies is incomplete until a nomination is received. (Chapter 4 speaks in greater depth about the congressional nomination process).

Prospective USCGA cadets can access the admission application on July 15, with an early action deadline of October 15 and a regular admissions deadline of January 15. Applicants must submit or complete transcripts, essays, standardized test scores, a medical examination, a physical fitness examination, letters of recommendation, and an interview if requested by the admission division. Prospective cadets who submit by the early action deadline receive their admission decisions by December 23. Regular admission decisions are announced on January 29. Admitted students must accept the offer of admission by May 1. The medical examination deadline for all applicants is April 15, and they must submit any required medical waivers by May 15. All enrollment paperwork is due by June 1, and cadets report to begin their Swab Summer on the last Monday of

June.¹² Swab Summer is the immersive initial training through which all cadets are oriented to the mission, values, culture, and organization of the Coast Guard

The admission division reviews applications on a rolling basis. Once all portions of an application are complete, the application goes into review. The admissions committee, composed of the Admission Director, Deputy AD, senior leadership, admissions staff, and USCGA faculty, review each completed application to offer an admissions decision. The admissions committee evaluates candidates according to various criteria, including an applicant's potential to develop into a leader of character, ability to thrive academically at USCGA, ability to meet the physical demand of the USCGA and the Coast Guard, and how an applicant would enrich campus life for the benefit of others.¹³ Admissions decisions include appoint (full or conditional), do not appoint, waitlist, recommend USCGA Scholars (prep school), or reevaluation.

Diversity of Corps of Cadets

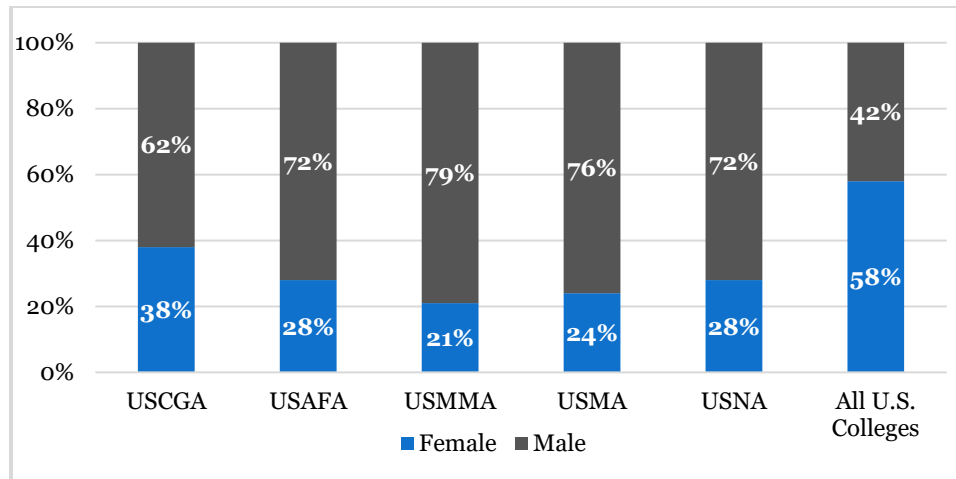
A stated priority of USCGA's Admissions Division is increasing diversity among its Corps of Cadets. This priority has led to several initiatives. One is the Academy Minority Outreach Team (AMOT), a program that focuses on recruiting and retaining cadets of color. Additional efforts are the Genesis invitational program, the Science Technology Engineering Program (STEP), and the USCGA partnerships with various affinity-specific college fairs (see Chapter 5, Organizational Issues, for a summary of these initiatives).

Focusing on gender diversity, according to the Department of Education data provided in Figure 2, female enrollment at the USCGA during the Fall of 2020 was higher than in other service academies. The percentage of female enrollment at the USCGA in Fall 2020 was 38 percent, 10 percentage points higher than the United States Naval Academy (USNA) and the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), 14 percentage points higher than the United States Military Academy (USMA), and 17 percentage points higher than the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). However, female enrollment at all federal service academies is below the average for U.S. colleges, 58 percent.

¹² These dates are representative of the class of 2027 admissions cycle. Dates vary slightly depending on the admissions cycle.

¹³ "USCGA Admissions Partner Webinar – 2019-20 Application and Interview Updates," USCGA Admissions, September 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAyTLzvJvY&t=1971s>.

Figure 2. 2020 Fall Enrollment by Sex at Federal Service Academies and All U.S. Colleges

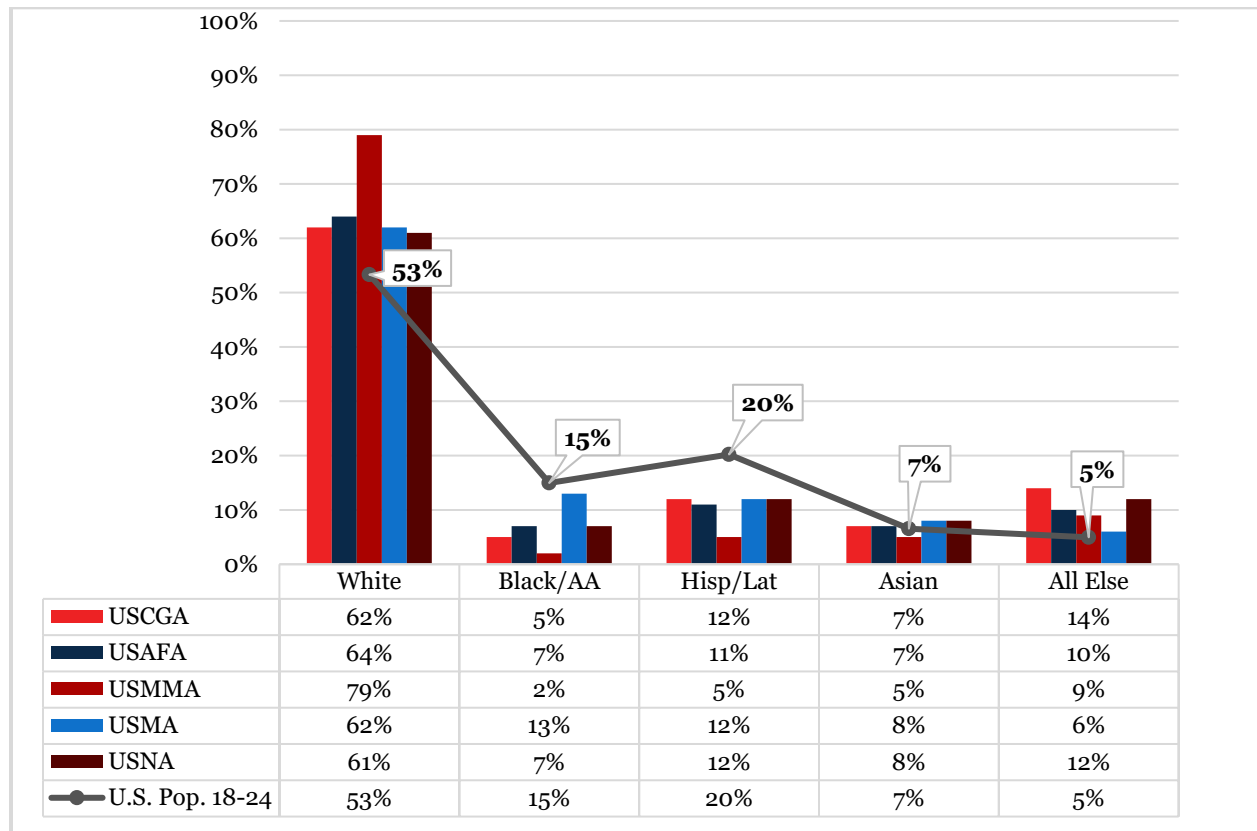


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Regarding race and ethnicity, Department of Education data in Figure 3 shows that White student enrollment is comparable at USCGA, USMA, and USNA, all in the 61 to 62 percent range. USAFA is slightly higher at 64 percent. USMMA has a much higher percentage of White students, 79 percent. Students who identify as Black or Hispanic/Latino are underrepresented at all the academies.¹⁴

¹⁴ In this table, individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity are not counted in any racial category.

Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity of Total Enrollment, Federal Service Academies, and the U.S. College-Age Population, 2021



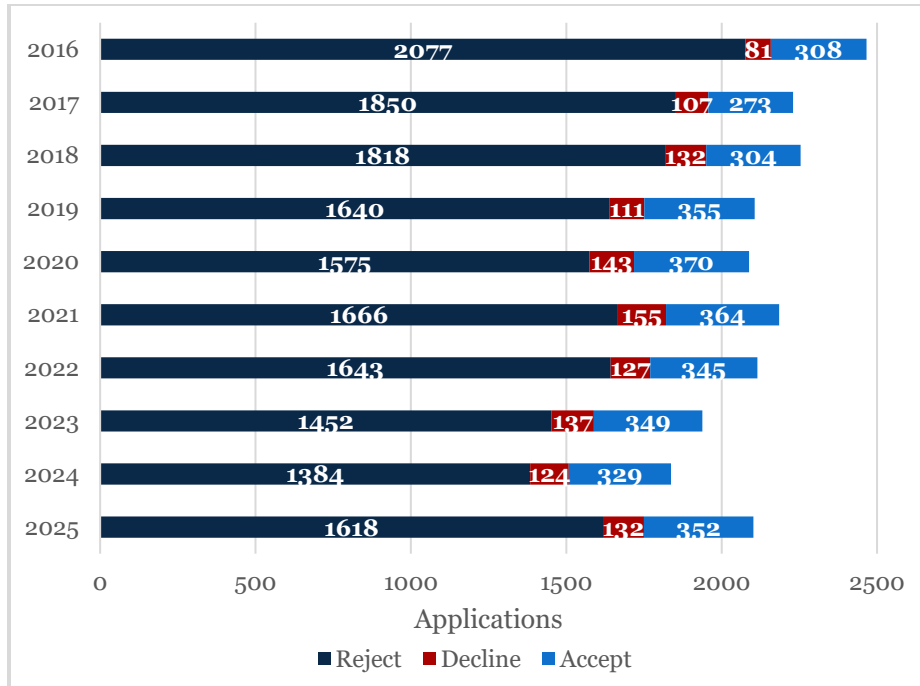
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and U.S. Census Bureau

Applications, Yield, and Selectivity

The number of applications has fluctuated each year, as shown in Figure 4. Since the class of 2016, applications have generally been trending downward, although the number of applications for the most recent cycle (class of 2025) was higher (2,102) than the previous two cycles (1,837, class of 2024 and 1,938, class of 2023). Recent application fluctuation may be related to the pandemic when many colleges and universities experienced unexpected swings in applications and acceptances.

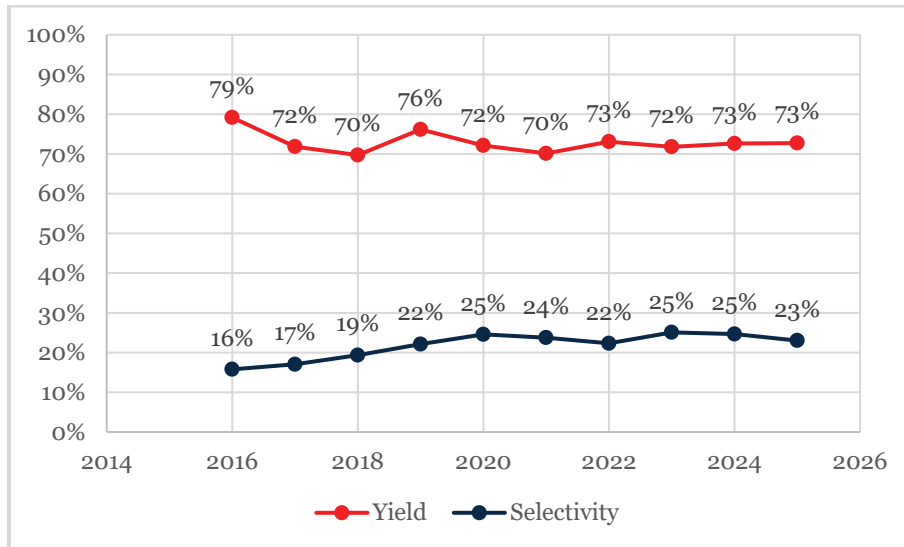
Figure 5 displays the yield and selectivity rates. The yield rate is the percentage of admitted students who accept the offer of admission. A higher yield rate reflects well on an institution of higher education. Yield has also fluctuated from year to year. Aside from highs for the classes of 2016 (79 percent) and 2019 (76 percent), the yield has ranged from 70 percent (class of 2018) to 73 percent (class of 2022). The selectivity rate is the percentage of applicants who are offered admission. A lower selectivity rate bolsters a school’s reputation. Beginning with the class of 2019, USCGA’s selectivity rate has ranged from 22 to 25 percent.

Figure 4. USCGA Applications Rejected, Declined, and Accepted, Classes of 2016-2025



Source: USCGA Institutional Review Board

Figure 5. USCGA Yield and Selectivity Rates, Classes of 2016-2025



Source: USCGA Institutional Review Board

Chapter 3: Current State and 10–15-year Outlook of the Candidate Pool

Admissions play a crucial role in the life of USCGA and the future of USCG, but the function has become more complex and the recruitment environment more competitive. This chapter describes emerging challenges in recruiting students to USCGA and USCG. The Admissions Division has faced these challenges while under increasing strain. Continuing on the same path will not likely produce the required results in the future. Later chapters propose strategies to change the trajectory.

Emerging challenges relate to changes in demographic and values. A declining number of college-aged adults in the United States and a declining enrollment among U.S. residents mean that institutions compete for a smaller pool of potential applicants. USCGA faces additional obstacles, such as a declining propensity to serve in the military among 16–25-year-olds and USCGA and USCG’s low profile in many parts of the country. Eroding trust in the value of college education, accelerated by the pandemic, is driving young adults to pursue other options. As at many other higher education institutions, USCGA officials want to increase diversity in the corps of cadets, but—as explained in this chapter—they are at a competitive disadvantage with other public and private institutions.

Admissions affect the future of USCG

The charge of the Admissions Division is to recruit each incoming class to USCGA. Along with retention, recruitment shapes the Corps of Cadets. Upon graduation, cadets are commissioned as ensigns in the USCG and complete their service obligations. Many continue as leaders in the Service. Therefore, the USCGA admissions office is vital to the future of the USCG. The New London campus offers additional pathways to USCG leadership. Officer Candidate School (OCS) is open to civilians and enlisted personnel. The Direct Commission Officer (DCO) course is an entry point for individuals with specialized experience. Almost half (43 percent) of USCG officers attended USCGA; the rest joined the program through OCS or DCO.¹⁵

The Admissions team advances Service recruitment goals. Like the other federal service academies, USCGA Admissions does more than offer appointments to individuals who will attend the Academy and complete the program. They are also recruiting individuals who will thrive in the Service. USCGA Admissions also refers approximately 3,000 prospects each year to Coast

¹⁵ Unlike the other services, USCG does not have a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program. There are currently USCG Junior ROTC programs at six high schools in the United States. No service obligation is associated with the JROTC program. “JROTC Units,” U.S. Coast Guard, <https://www.uscg.mil/Community/JROTC/JROTC-Units/>. USCG also offers a Coast Guard College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI). Students admitted to this program receive financial support to complete their undergraduate degrees. Following graduation, they attend Officer Candidate School. “College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI) Scholarship Program,” U.S. Coast Guard, <https://www.gocoastguard.com/get-started/officer-applications/college-student-pre-commissioning-initiative-cspi-scholarship>.

Guard Recruiting Command (CGRC). These individuals may have completed the application but were not offered an Academy appointment.

The Admissions Director Position Is Both Complex and Demanding

The growing complexity and challenges of the admissions environment mean that the Admissions Director (AD) needs extensive preparation and experience to succeed. The demands begin immediately, regardless of how much time the AD has had to become familiar with the position. The AD is expected to understand the institution, its people, history, norms and standards, processes, and planning for the future. Regardless of whether the AD has direct contact with prospective students, they are responsible for ensuring the critical elements of the institution and its programs are communicated accurately and fairly. The admissions process has also become increasingly data-intensive over time. The AD might not be responsible for collecting and analyzing the data but must understand the implications.

Every admissions cycle begins with many prospects but zero applicants. The AD oversees the team's efforts to convert those prospects into applicants and cadets. Institutions' admissions programming typically changes little from year to year, having been developed through trial and error and adopting best practices over time. Yet the AD must continue to finetune the process, accounting for lessons learned.

The typical AD position requires extensive education, training, and experience. A scan of current vacancy listings for college admissions directors shows that minimum qualifications include a bachelor's degree plus a master's degree and seven to ten years of increasingly responsible experience. Some institutions allow applicants to substitute years of experience for a graduate degree.¹⁶

All five of the federal service academies are part of a federal agency (Defense, Homeland Security, or Transportation) that is neither designed nor oriented to operate an institution of higher education. As a result, academy officials must fit academic year operations and cycles into federal decision making, budgeting, and hiring procedures and processes. The four military service academies also operate within branches of the armed services. These dual superstructures shape the academies' working environments, providing an extensive and complex support system, a challenging logistical framework, and constraints associated with being small, albeit cherished, units of much larger wholes.

Demographics Are Shifting

Colleges and Universities Are Competing for a Smaller Number of U.S. College-aged Students

The number of college-aged individuals has been declining, falling by half a million (1.5 percent) between 2010 and 2019. During this period, the under-18 age group also fell (by 1.1 million or 1.5

¹⁶ The scan included college AD job postings on LinkedIn, Monster, and ZipRecruiter in December 2022.

percent), suggesting the declining number of college-aged individuals is likely to continue¹⁷ (see Table 1 below). Moreover, the number of U.S.-born babies has been declining. Since 2007, the start of the Great Recession, the total fertility rate (the number of births per thousand women) has consistently fallen short of the level at which a generation can replace itself.¹⁸ Table 1 also shows that between 2010 and 2019, the decrease in college enrollment (- 8.4 percent) outpaced the decline in the U.S. college-age population (- 1.5 percent).

The declining number of youth is expected to reduce the number of high school graduates and 18-year-olds enrolling in postsecondary education through at least 2029. However, modeling developed by Carlton College professor Nathan Grawe projects that enrollment at the most competitive colleges and universities in the United States will increase through 2029.¹⁹

Table 1. Population (Under 18 and 18-24) and Postsecondary Enrollment Changes from 2010 to 2019

Group	2010 (millions)	2019 (millions)	Change 2010 to 2019 (millions)	2035 Projection (millions)	Change 2019 to 2035 (millions)
Population under 18	74.2	73.0	- 1.1 (- 1.5%)	76.7	+ 3.6 (+ 5.0%)
Population 18-24	30.7	30.2	- 0.5 (- 1.5%)	30.5	+ 0.3 (+ 1.0%)
Postsecondary enrollment	18.1	16.6	- 1.5 (- 8.4%)	2030 Projection	
				17.1	+ 0.6 (+ 3.6%)

Sources: population data – U.S. Census Bureau;²⁰ population projections – U.S. Census Bureau;²¹ enrollment data – Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).²²

According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, the number of high school graduates is expected to peak in the mid-2020s and then gradually decline at least through 2037;

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, “Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010, to July 1, 2019 (NC-EST2019-ASR6H),” released on June 2020.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, “Births: Provisional Data for 2021” Report No. 20, May 2022, accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr020.pdf>.

¹⁹ Dorn, Emma, Andre Dua, Jonathan Law, and Samvitha Ram, “Higher Education Enrollment: Inevitable Decline or Online Opportunity?” McKinsey & Company, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/higher-education-enrollment-inevitable-decline-or-online-opportunity>.

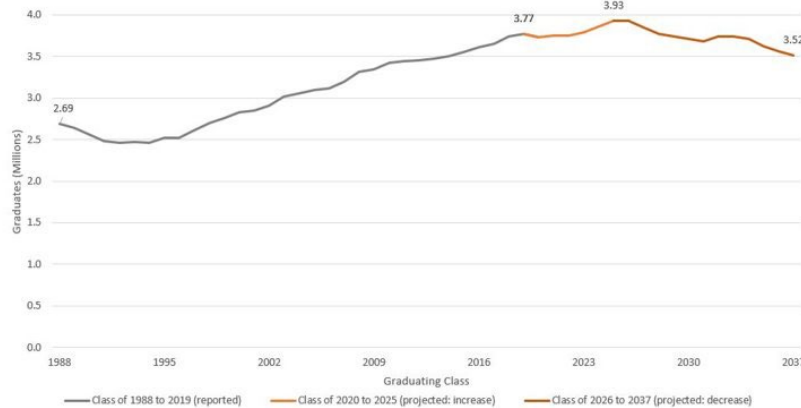
²⁰ Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010, to July 1, 2019 (NC-EST2019-ASR6H). Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division; Release Date: June 2020.

²¹ Projected Age Groups and Sex Composition of the Population: Main Projections Series for the United States, 2017-2060. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division: Washington, DC.

²² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2010 through Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component. Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model through 2030. See Digest of Education Statistics 2021, table 303.70, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha>.

see Figure 6. Enrollment and completion of high school remained steady during the pandemic, but enrollment in primary school declined as a relatively large number of families opted for home schooling. The long-term impact of this shift is unclear.

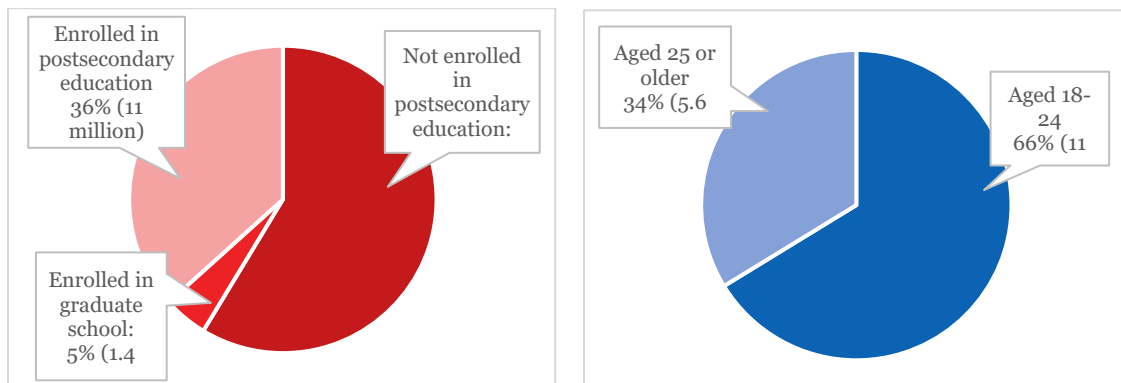
Figure 6. Number of High School Graduates, 1988 - 2037 (projected)



Source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education²³

Most college students are 18-24, but most 18-24-year-olds are not enrolled in college. Figure 7 compares the enrollment status of 18–24-year-olds (young adults) to the age distribution of students enrolled in postsecondary education. Two-thirds of students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities are 18-24, considered the “traditional” age to attend college. However, only 36 percent of this age group pursued an undergraduate degree in 2019. The traditional age is relevant to USCGA because, per USCG and USCGA policy, applicants must be 17-22 on the last Monday in June.²⁴

Figure 7. Enrollment Status of 18-24-year-olds and Age Distribution of Students Enrolled in Postsecondary Education in the United States, 2019



²³ Peace Bransberger, Colleen Falkenstern, and Patrick Lane, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking on the College Door*, 10th edition, December, 2020, <https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Knocking-pdf-for-website.pdf>.

²⁴ U.S. Coast Guard Academy, “Admission Requirements,” accessed December 8, 2022, <https://uscga.edu/admissions/admission-requirements/>.

Sources: population data, enrollment rate – U.S. Census Bureau; enrollment data – National Center for Education Statistics.²⁵

The U.S. College-aged Population is Becoming More Diverse

The U.S. population aged 18-24 identifying as White or Black is declining, as shown in Table 2. While the total population in this age group experienced a net decrease of half a million from 2010 to 2019, the numbers of Hispanic, Asian, and other identities (American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPI), and two or more races (excluding Hispanic)) increased by 1.2 million. The number of people aged 18-24 in the United States identifying as Black also declined during this period.

Table 2. U.S. Resident Population Aged 18-24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 and 2019

Population Aged 18-24	2010 (millions)	2019 (millions)	Change 2010 to 2019 (millions)	Percent Change, 2010 to 2019
White	17.6	16.1	-1.5	-8.6
Black	4.4	4.3	- 0.1	-3.1
Hispanic	6.2	6.9	+ 0.7	+11.5
Asian	1.5	1.7	+ 0.2	+ 13.4
Other	1.0	1.3	+ 0.3	+ 28.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.²⁶

U.S. Residents Enrolling in College Are Increasingly Diverse

Like the college-aged population, postsecondary enrollment is also becoming more diverse. Table 3 shows that the number of students identifying as White or Black declined by 3.4 million while Hispanic, Asian, and other race identities grew by 1.3 million. These figures do not include more than 0.4 million international students (2019) representing a wide range of racial and ethnic identities.²⁷

²⁵ Population data: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, “Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010, to July 1, 2019 (NC-EST2019-ASR6H),” released in June 2020.

Enrollment rate: U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2010 through 2020.” See Digest of Education Statistics 2021, table 302.60, retrieved December 28, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cpb>.

Enrollment data: National Center for Education Statistics, “Undergraduate Enrollment (2022).” Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, retrieved December 28, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha>.

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, “Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010, to July 1, 2019 (NC-EST2019-ASR6H),” release date: June 2020. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2010-2019/national/asrh/nc-est2019-asr6h.xlsx>.

²⁷ OpenDoors, “International Students: Academic Level,” accessed January 19, 2023, at <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/international-students/academic-level/>.

Table 3. Number of U.S. Residents Enrolled in College, by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 and 2020

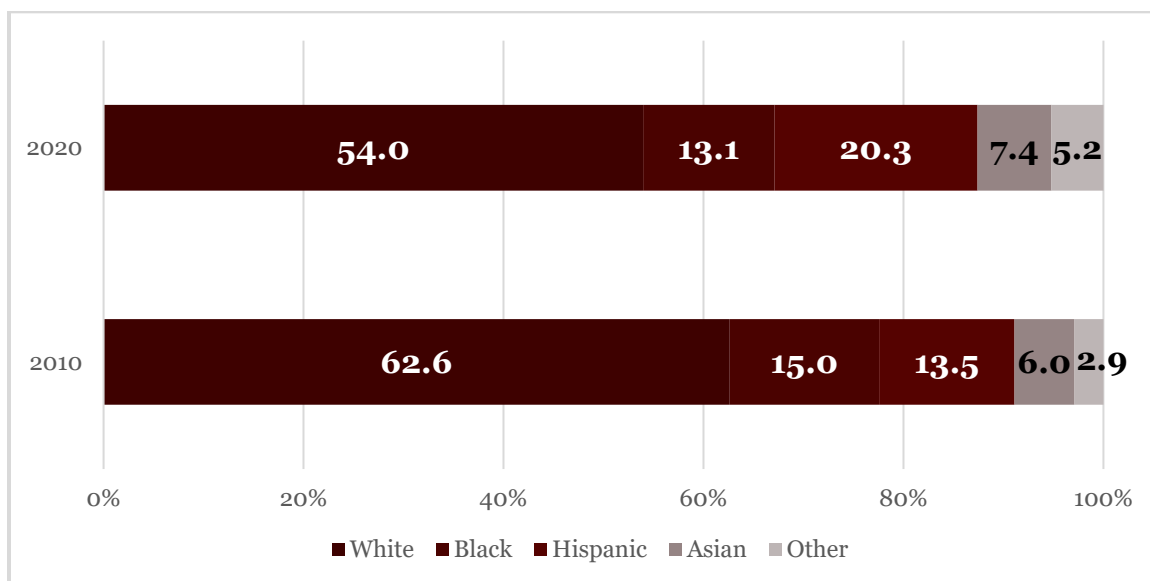
College Enrollment	2010 (millions)	2020 (millions)	Change 2010 to 2020 (millions)	Percent Change, 2010 to 2020
White	12.72	9.80	- 2.92	- 23.0
Black	3.04	2.38	- 0.66	- 21.6
Hispanic	2.75	3.69	+ 0.94	+ 34.2
Asian	1.22	1.34	+ 0.12	+ 10.2
Other	0.59	0.93	+ 0.34	+ 59.1
Total	20.31	18.14	- 2.2	- 10.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS); Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).²⁸

Figure 8 displays the changing race and ethnicity on campus, including students enrolled in graduate programs. The share of White students declined by 8.6 percentage points from 2010 to 2020. The share of Black students fell by 1.9 percentage points. More than one in five students identify as Hispanic, now the second-largest group enrolled in postsecondary education.

²⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1976 and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90-99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, through 2030. (This table was prepared in November 2021.) Table 306.30. "Fall enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1976 through 2030." Accessed at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_306.30.asp.

Figure 8. Fall enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, percentage distribution by race/ethnicity, 2020 and 2010



Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS); Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).²⁹

College Enrollment Rates Among Young Adults Have Declined

The Census Bureau estimates that between 2010 and 2020, the percentage of all 18-24-year-olds enrolled in college declined by 1.2 percentage points, from 41.2 percent to 40.0 percent. This decade appears to have marked the reversal of a gradually increasing college enrollment rate in the United States, which rose from 1970 (25.7 percent) to 2009 (41.3 percent).³⁰

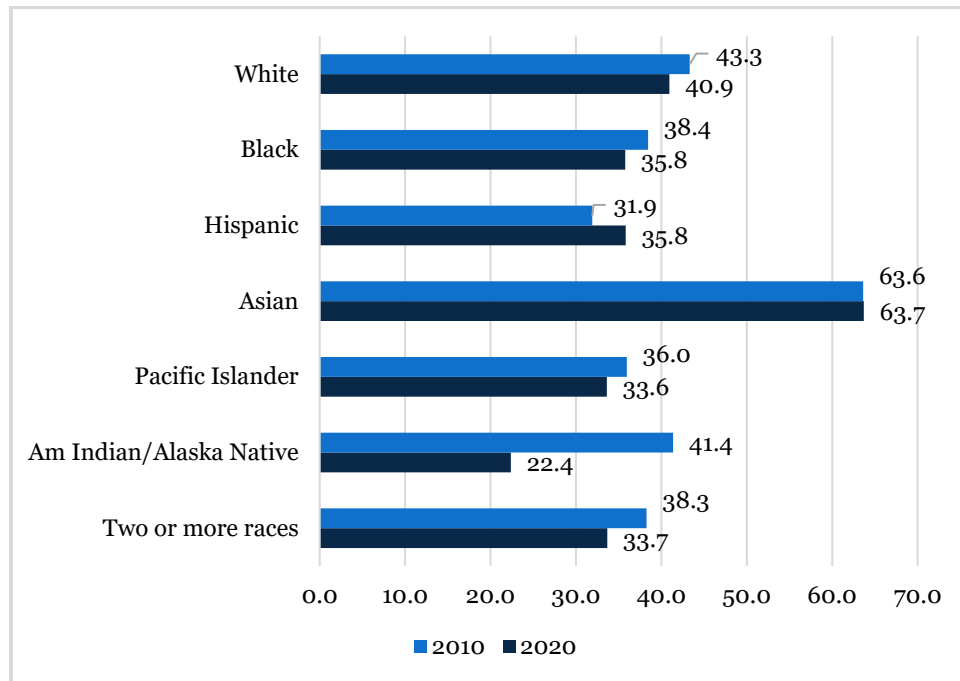
Declines by most racial and ethnic groups during this period were in the 2.4 to 4.6 percentage point range. The largest drop was among American Indian and Alaska Native young adults, falling by 19.0 percentage points. The rate among Asian young adults held steady at just under 64 percent. During this period, the percentage of young adults identifying as Hispanic and enrolled

²⁹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1976 and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90-99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, through 2030. (This table was prepared in November 2021.) Table 306.30, "Fall enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1976 through 2030," accessed at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_306.30.asp.

³⁰ Figures come from the Current Population Survey, which makes inferences about the population based on data collected in a sample. Using the number of people who participated in the survey, statisticians are able to calculate how accurate the results are (the "standard error") and develop a range of likely true results. For example, Figure 7 shows that in 2010, 43.3 percent of White 18-24-year-olds were enrolled in college. The reported standard error (not shown) indicates that the true percentage in the population is likely between 41.7 and 44.9 percent.

in college rose by 3.9 percentage points to reach par with Black young adults at 35.8 percent. Figure 9 displays the college enrollment rates by race and ethnicity in 2010 and 2019.

Figure 9. College Enrollment Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 and 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau³¹

A Relatively Small Part of the Population Is Eligible or Interested in Military Service

The Propensity to Serve Is Declining

The Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) is the official Department of Defense (DoD) program exploring American youth’s perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding joining the military. The program helps services understand the recruiting environment, enabling them to target resources and refine messaging. JAMRS supports USCG recruiting but not USCGA directly. Nonetheless, the biennial Fall 2021 Propensity Update, released in August 2022, found that the propensity to serve continues to decline; approximately 9 percent of youth are interested in military service, the lowest rate since 2007. The rate is slightly higher among males (11 percent) than females (8 percent). Black and Hispanic respondents generally showed a greater interest in military service and becoming military officers than White and Asian respondents.³²

JAMRS survey results also provide insight into individuals’ thinking about the military, suggesting opportunities for the Coast Guard and other services to present themselves favorably. The top reasons respondents identified for joining the military would be pay, education benefits,

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey (CPS), October 1970 through 2020.” This table was prepared August 2021. Accessed at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_302.60.asp.

³² Unpublished data provided by JAMRS on December 29, 2022.

travel, health and medical benefits, and the opportunity to gain experience and work skills. The biggest concerns relate to the possibility of physical or emotional harm, leaving family and friends, other career interests, and dislike of the military lifestyle.³³

Young Adults Joining the Military Come From a Small Number of Communities

Knowing somebody in the military or a veteran is a strong predictor of enlisting. In 2019, 30 percent of Army recruits reported having a parent who served. For another 49 percent, another family member had served. Communities around military bases also sent a disproportionate number of recruits to the military. For example, in 2019, more than twice as many military enlistment contracts came from the Fort Bragg (North Carolina) community than from Manhattan, which is eight times more populous.³⁴

USCGA officials have observed a similar phenomenon among its students. About half of the new enrollees each year come from one of six types of “neighborhood clusters,” as categorized by the College Board. These are communities throughout the U.S. that share demographic characteristics. The analysis does not attempt to determine which characteristics are predictive of military service, as opposed to simply being correlated.³⁵

Fewer Young Adults Meet Physical and Mental Health Requirements

An increasing percentage of college-age students have potentially disqualifying physical or mental health conditions. A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) looked at adolescents’ mental health and substance use in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. It found an increase in suicide attempts and self-harm, especially among women. Anxiety and depression affected an estimated 16 percent of adolescents, compared to 11 percent in 2017. Mental and behavioral health conditions, including anxiety and depression, may be considered as disqualifying for appointment as outlined in DoDI 6130.03, Volume I “Medical Standards for Military Service: Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction.”³⁶ Obesity is a growing problem among U.S. youth, with rates rising as adolescents approach adulthood. It is associated with an increased risk of health issues and lower

³³ Office of People Analytics, Department of Defense, “Fall 2021 Propensity Update,” August 9, 2022, <https://jamrs.defense.gov/Portals/20/Documents/YP51Fall2021PUBLICRELEASEPropensityUpdate.pdf?ver=FE5vDYeDzsgNRbEssX3Z4g%3d%3d>

³⁴ Dave Philipps and Tim Arango, “Who Signs Up to Fight? Makeup of U.S. Recruits Shows Glaring Disparity,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/us/military-enlistment.html>.

³⁵ USCGA Marketing Plan, unpublished.

³⁶ DoD Instruction 6130.03, Volume I “Medical Standards for Military Service: Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction,” https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/613003_vol1.PDF?ver=7fhqaccojGX_R9_iexudA%3D%3D.

fitness rates.³⁷ JAMRS data estimate that in 2020, only 23 percent of the population do not have disqualifying conditions. Mental health and obesity have been the primary factors.

Fewer Young Adults See the Value of a College Education

Confidence in the value of college education has been declining since before the pandemic. A 2019 Gallup survey found that 51 percent of adults considered a college education very important. This figure represents a 17-percentage point drop from 2013. By age, the steepest decline occurred among 18-29-year-olds. In 2013, 74 percent viewed college as very important. Six years later, only 41 percent of this age group shared this view.³⁸ The Gallup survey also found that several subgroups of the population place higher importance on education, including women (compared to men), Black and Hispanic adults (compared to White adults), and Democrats and Independents (compared to Republicans). Several explanations for declining enrollment have been offered. They include a growing cynicism about the value of higher education, concerns about the cost, the perception that college is not good preparation for the workforce, and, for some, discomfort with the values predominant on college campuses.³⁹

The experience of the pandemic that began during the 2019-20 academic year turned many more potential students away from postsecondary education. In Fall 2020, enrollment was 3.4 percent lower than at the beginning of the previous academic year. By Fall 2021, enrollment had dropped another 3.2 percent.⁴⁰ The rate of decline has returned to a “nearly pre-pandemic” rate of 1.1 percent. Early evidence suggests the pandemic hit less selective colleges and universities the hardest. A recent report by Gallup and the Lumina Foundation suggested many causes. Sudden and severe financial distress, especially among some segments of the population, heightened concerns about the cost of a college degree. Health concerns, burnout, and emotional distress dampened enrollment and increased dropouts.⁴¹

USCGA Faces a Competitive Environment

USCGA Competes with Other Federal Service Academies for a Highly Qualified Pool of Candidates

USCGA is one of five federal service academies, all recruiting from the same general pool of U.S. citizens who are physically fit, strong in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and motivated to serve their country. All five academies cover tuition, room, and board

³⁷ Steven Reinberg, “Obesity Rates Continue to Climb Among U.S. Kids, Teens,” *U.S. News and World Report*, July 25, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-07-25/obesity-rates-continue-to-climb-among-u-s-kids-teens>.

³⁸ Stephanie Marken, Half in U.S. Now Consider College Education Very Important, December 30, 2019, <https://www.gallup.com/education/272228/half-consider-college-education-important.aspx>.

³⁹ Jon Marcus, How Higher Education Lost Its Shine, August 10, 2022, <https://hechingerreport.org/how-higher-education-lost-its-shine/>.

⁴⁰ Todd Sedmak, Fall 2021 Undergraduate Enrollment Declines 465,300 Students Compared to Fall 2020, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/researchcenter/viz/Fall2021Enrollment19_23/StayInformedFall2021.

⁴¹ *The State of Higher Education 2022 Report*, Gallup, <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/391829/state-of-higher-education-2022.aspx>.

and offer opportunities to participate in NCAA sports. Students at the four federal military service academies join the respective services, receiving base pay and health care.

Like the other federal service academies, USCGA has strict qualification criteria. In addition to academic and fitness requirements, cadets must discharge any debts before starting the program. They may not be married or have any dependents. They must not have disqualifying medical conditions, although some can be waived. A long list of disqualifying conditions includes allergies, color blindness, insufficient teeth, hearing loss, vision issues, psychiatric disorders, and other physical limitations that could interfere with the discharge of duties.⁴²

USCGA qualification criteria are established and administered separately from USCG criteria, but a recent development could be a harbinger of future changes. In November 2022, USCG formalized a waiver process to allow single parents to enlist. It also relaxed allowable debt-to-income ratios and age limits. Recruiters already had the authority to waive requirements for promising applicants, but relaxing the rules could encourage more individuals to apply.⁴³

The Most Qualified Applicants Have Many Options

Young adults can receive a similar education at other higher education institutions in the United States. In 2020, more than two million individuals in the United States completed a bachelor's degree. Six percent of them (128,332) majored in engineering. Asian and international students pursue engineering at higher rates than the general college population, while Black and Hispanic students are under-represented in this field.⁴⁴

Unlike other colleges and universities, the federal service academies offer military career preparation along with the engineering degree. They do not charge tuition, room, or board, so graduates can expect to complete their educations without debt. By contrast, public and private higher education institutions typically offer scholarships for no more than full tuition, with those awards going to the most promising students.

Conclusion

The USCGA Admissions Division has been paddling upstream in an increasingly strong current. Changing demographics, shifting perceptions of college and military service, and an increasingly competitive environment make recruitment more challenging. The following chapters include recommendations for how USCGA can continue the journey successfully.

⁴² Applicants must receive a medical screening by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB) as part of their application package to USCGA. DoDMERB determines if the applicant has a disqualifying condition in accordance with DoDI 6130.03, Volume I “Medical Standards for Military Service: Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction”. USCGA is the authority to waive those disqualifying conditions identified by DoDMERB. USCGA may reach out to an applicant to request additional medical information to assist in making a waiver determination.

⁴³ National Center for Education Statistics. “Digest of Education Statistics, 2021.” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. March 1, 2023. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_322.30.asp?current=yes.

⁴⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. “Digest of Education Statistics, 2021.” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). March 1, 2023. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_322.30.asp?current=yes.

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Chapter 4: Congressional Nomination Requirement

Section 8274 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021 calls for this study to determine how a congressional nomination requirement for U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) admissions could impact diversity among the student body and the ability of the Coast Guard to effectively carry out the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) primary duties.⁴⁵ This chapter will provide information on the other service academies' congressional nomination process (CNP), a brief overview of recent legislative action related to the CNP, arguments in support of and opposition to the CNP, and a discussion of the implications of introducing one to the USCGA admissions process. This chapter concludes with a recommendation regarding a CNP for the USCGA.

Background of the Congressional Nomination Process

Four of five federal service academies use a CNP: the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), U.S. Military Academy (USMA), U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). USCGA has never used a CNP in its admissions process.

All cadets attending the other military service academies and USMMA must receive a nomination to be considered for selection. Title 10 of the United States Code (U.S. Code) details the CNP requirements for USAFA,⁴⁶ USMA,⁴⁷ and USNA,⁴⁸ and Title 46 provides the CNP requirements for USMMA.⁴⁹ Each section contains codified instructions for the number of cadets admitted under each kind of nomination. U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, and Delegates from Washington, DC; the Virgin Islands; Puerto Rico; Guam; American Samoa; and Northern Mariana Islands may nominate individuals to the four federal service academies. These are considered congressional sources.

As provided by the U.S. Code, approximately two-thirds of nominations for USAFA, USMA, USNA, and USMMA come from congressional sources. At USMMA, the number of nominations allocated to a member of Congress is proportionate to the representation in Congress from that member's state.

For USAFA, USMA, and USNA, the U.S. Code provides that every member has five total slots for their constituents at each of these three academies at any given time. Annually, each member can submit up to ten names to these three military academies to fill a vacant slot. The ten nominations can be submitted to the military academies either "without ranking, with a principal candidate and nine ranked alternates, or with a principal candidate and nine unranked alternates."⁵⁰

No standardized policies govern the members' interview process or decision-making criteria for offering nominations. As a result, each member establishes their office's nomination criteria and

⁴⁵ NDAA, Section 8274.

The U.S. Coast Guard's primary duties can be found in U.S.C. Title 14, Section 102.

⁴⁶ U.S. Air Force Academy's congressional nominations process is outlined in 10 U.S.C. § 9442-9447.

⁴⁷ U.S. Military Academy's congressional nominations process is outlined in 10 U.S.C. § 7442-7447.

⁴⁸ U.S. Naval Academy's congressional nominations process is outlined in 10 U.S.C. § 8453-8456.

⁴⁹ U.S. Merchant Marine Academy's congressional nominations process is outlined in 46 U.S.C. § 51302.

⁵⁰ Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, *Gatekeepers to Opportunity: Racial Disparities in Congressional Nominations to the Military Service Academies*, 14-15, (March 17, 2021).

procedures. Some members conduct the interviews themselves, others delegate this task to their staffers, and some form committees of constituents to interview candidates and make recommendations to the member. Members are also not required to nominate anyone or use all of the nomination slots afforded to them by law.

While congressional members are a primary source of nominations, individuals can receive USMA, USAFA, and USNA nominations from other sources (see Figure 10 below). These additional nomination sources include the President of the United States, Vice President of the United States, Secretaries of the Armed Forces, and an academy’s Superintendent. Individuals may also receive a nomination for being the child of a disabled veteran, a veteran killed in action, a prisoner of war, or a Medal of Honor recipient. For USMMA, an individual may also receive a nomination from the Secretary of Transportation.

Figure 10. Non-Congressional Nominating Authorities for DoD Service Academies

Nominating Authority	Quantity and Type of Nominations
President	100 individuals whose parents served in the Armed Forces for eight consecutive active-duty years or eight years of reserve duty service, are retired, or deceased with one of these statuses.
Vice President	5 individuals at large.
Service Secretary	85 enlisted service members from the Secretary’s branch. 85 enlisted reservists from the Secretary’s department. 20 graduates from schools designated as honor schools by any of the military branches and from the Secretary’s Reserve Officer Training Corps ROTC). 150 individuals as alternates who received congressional nominations but were not appointed.
Service Academy Superintendent	50 individuals at large. 65 individuals whose parents are deceased, fully disabled, and missing or captured Armed Forces veterans or federal civilian personnel.
Puerto Rico’s Governor	1 individual who is a resident of Puerto Rico.

Source: 10 U.S.C. 9342, USAFA; 10 U.S.C. 6954, USNA; and 10 U.S.C. 4342, USMA

This report focuses only on the nominations process involving members of Congress, which is the scope of work dictated in the NDAA for the Academy study.⁵¹

Past Legislative Action

Public Accountability on Nominations Offered that Result in Admissions to Military Academies Act of 2020

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in enhancing transparency and accountability in the CNP. The Mac Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 included the Public Accountability on Nominations Offered, resulting in Admissions to Military Academies Act of 2020 (PANORAMA Act). The PANORAMA Act introduced several reforms aimed at doing so.⁵²

The PANORAMA Act requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to create a central portal for members of Congress to submit their military service academy nominations and maintain a record of their past nominations, including demographic information. The PANORAMA Act also requires the DoD service academies to align their racial and ethnic classifications with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Directive No. 15 standards.⁵³ The three military academies currently use different terminology to classify race and ethnicity. While the data specific to individuation nominations are not released to the public, the DoD publishes an annual report that provides aggregate data on the race and gender composition of the nominees from each application cycle.⁵⁴

Recent Legislative Proposal to Require a Nomination Process for USCGA

During the 116th session of Congress (2019-2020), Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS-2) introduced a bill (H.R. 3488) that would require nominations for half of each incoming USCGA class. Nominators would include the Vice President of the United States (or President pro tempore if there is no Vice President); Senators; House Representatives; or Delegates to Congress from the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, or the Northern

⁵¹ Per the Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act of the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA, this study includes “an analysis of how the congressional nominations requirement in current law related to military service academies and the Merchant Marine Academy impacts those processes and the overall demographics of the student bodies at those academies” and “recommendations for improving Coast Guard Academy admissions processes, including whether a congressional nominations process should be integrated into such processes.” See Appendix A for the full study language from the NDAA.

⁵² William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-283, §575, 134 Stat. 3645-3647.

⁵³ “OMB Directive No. 15 Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting” provides standard classifications for race and ethnicity in federal administrative reporting and statistical activities.

⁵⁴ In its *Gatekeepers to Opportunity* report, the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center asserts that while DoD’s annual reporting requirement is seen as enhancing transparency, the public report that DoD must release fails to provide the complete picture of those seeking nominations because only the aggregate demographics of those who received nominations are reported (p. 16).

Mariana Islands. Each Senator, Representative, and Delegate to Congress would be able to nominate three people annually.

The bill was referred to the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee in June 2019 but was not passed out of committee.⁵⁵ This bill is the most recent legislative proposal to introduce a CNP to USCGA. Rep. Thompson introduced a similarly worded bill in the 112th Congress.⁵⁶

Possible Benefits of Introducing a Congressional Nomination Process for the USCGA

A nomination process for the USCGA could increase diversity in two ways.

Congressional Offices Could Enhance Geographic Diversity and Supplement Admissions Divisions' Reach

The officer corps for the different services should include people from all corners of the nation. A central concept of the CNP is to facilitate geographic diversity at the service academies. The CNP offers opportunities to members of Congress from all 50 states to nominate qualified individuals. When utilized to the maximum extent, the CNP provides service academies with an applicant pool that is geographically representative of the entire United States.

The geographic reach that members of Congress have can contribute to the service academies' admissions divisions' outreach efforts, especially when limited resources may not permit an academy's recruiting staff to visit every district annually. The CNP helps constituents across the country to learn about the service academies through their member of Congress' website, communications, and community presence.

Many members of Congress also routinely host a "service academy information night" for students, parents, guardians, or guidance counselors in their districts or states. While the congressional offices primarily focus their efforts on USAFA, USMA, USNA, and USMMA because of their obligation to submit nominations, the congressional offices often invite USCGA to participate in these service academy nights.

Although these "academy information nights" are not standard practice for all offices, these events can increase community awareness of the service academies and, most importantly, provide young Americans with the opportunity to learn more about the academies and their application processes.

⁵⁵ Some concepts from the H.R. 3488 bill were incorporated into the Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act section of the FY 2020 NDAA, including the requirement for this NAPA study on the USCGA's admissions process. H.R. 3488, 116th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3488/text>.

⁵⁶ H.R. 3695, 112th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/3695/text?r=73&s=1>.

Admissions Divisions Can Utilize Nomination Data to Enhance Outreach

The service academies use data from the nominations they receive to inform their outreach efforts, targeting students from under-nominating districts. This outreach involves sharing information about the academy experience and encouraging them to seek a nomination from their representative or senator.

For example, USAFA uses nominations data to identify under-nominating districts. USAFA uses its nominations data to apply additional resources to underrepresented congressional districts. To increase awareness of USAFA in these underrepresented communities, USAFA Admissions will invite a cohort of influencers (such as educators, community leaders, congressional staffers, etc.) from those communities each year to visit the campus in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The influencers will tour the USAFA campus and learn about the CNP, the admissions process, and careers in the Air Force. Ultimately, these influencers can inform their students about USAFA and the application process.

Although under-nominated districts reduce the possibility of full geographic diversity in the academies' student bodies, these data can inform admissions outreach strategies.

Arguments Opposing a Congressional Nomination Process

Four arguments suggest that a CNP would not enhance diversity in the USCGA Corps of Cadets.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities at Service Academies

Based on demographic data, diversity at the five federal service academies does not mirror the nation's diversity. As highlighted in Table 2 in Chapter 3, the college-age population in the U.S. is becoming increasingly diverse. The CNP for other academies has not demonstrably increased the gender, racial, or ethnic diversity at those academies. The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's *Gatekeepers to Opportunity* report asserts that the CNP perpetuates racial disparities because members of Congress are more likely to nominate White students over Black, Hispanic, or Asian and Pacific Islander students.⁵⁷ That report points out that White students are over-represented in congressional nominations: "white students received 74% of nominations despite comprising 54% of the U.S. population aged 18 to 24."⁵⁸ This disparity may be explained by either low CNP application rates from students of underrepresented populations or offices under-nominating students from underrepresented populations.

Perceived Unintended Inequities

In addition to the disproportionate likelihood that underrepresented students have of receiving a nomination, there are varying perceptions among researchers suggesting that there may be unequal access to applying for and ultimately receiving a nomination.

⁵⁷ Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 3.

⁵⁸ Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 5.

No definitive research is readily available on possible barriers citizens perceive to engaging with a congressional office. However, there are articles and posts that suggest that most Americans do not reach out to their member of Congress. While not definitive, it implies that adding the step could become an obstacle for some Americans, particularly for underrepresented populations.

Applying for a congressional nomination is an option for all young people who meet the basic qualifications (e.g., age, citizenship, marital status, no dependents, legal residence). Despite few restrictions on who can apply, the nomination process may deter some from applying because they believe their chances of receiving a nomination are slim. Some believe that they, or someone they know, must have a personal connection to the member of Congress to obtain a nomination.

While information about the application process is publicly available on members' websites, students may have unequal access to preparation and support during this process. Some school counselors may be unfamiliar with the CNP or may not have the resources to support every student going through the college application cycle. Other students may have an advantage in preparing their CNP application because they have guidance from someone who went through the process before. Applying for a CNP could be seen as an added hurdle.

Variation in Congressional Offices' Application Process

There is no standardized application process across congressional offices. Applicants may need to familiarize themselves with three CNP application processes: one for their Representative and two for their Senators. However, the lack of standardization in the CNP application process presents an added hurdle for applicants.

Most congressional offices provide CNP application information on their website. However, some offices do not publicly post information about the application components and require applicants to email their office to obtain that information. Of the offices that outline their processes online, the required application elements vary considerably. Some offices require both SAT and ACT scores. Others require only one set of scores, and a smaller number of offices do not require any standardized test scores (often citing the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequities of standardized testing). The USCGA has transitioned to a standardized test-optional posture following the COVID-19 pandemic. Transitioning to a CNP could reduce the USCGA's flexibility in setting admissions requirements to meet the demands of the enrollment environment.

Most offices require letters of recommendation, but the number of letters needed can vary from one to more than four. Some offices require personal statements, while others do not. The application deadlines vary between early October to early December. There are variations in the application submission methods: through an online form, an email, or the mail.

The most significant variation appears in the process of screening CNP applicants. Methods for screening applicants include an interview with a committee of constituents (often involving graduates from the academies or a group of community leaders), an interview with a congressional staff member, or only considering the application. Some offices require a recent photograph of the applicant and, in a few instances, a video submission.

The criteria for screening CNP applicants vary by office, too. There is no standardized way offices evaluate applications. Inevitably, members and their interview committees have their preferences

or implicit biases. Some offices may favor applicants from underrepresented communities, while others may not consider demographics in the decision-making process.

Variation in Congressional Nominating Proclivity

While the U.S. Code prescribes set quantities of nominations that a member of Congress may submit, some members of Congress do not offer the full number of nominations permitted.

Members of Congress may submit their nominations as a ranked list, a list with one primary choice and nine alternates, or a list with a top pick and nine unranked alternates. Some offices will maintain a record of their nominations, including demographic information, but the offices are not required to do so. This lack of a nominations demographic record should change with the PANORAMA Act.

While the U.S. Code prescribes set quantities of nominations that a member of Congress may submit, some do not offer the full number of nominations permitted. When the existing CNP allocation is not fully utilized, districts are inevitably not equally represented at the academies. This underrepresentation results in lower geographic diversity than the CNP intends to promote.

Discussion of Introducing a Congressional Nomination Process to the Coast Guard Academy

Conversely, if introducing a CNP were to lead to a decrease in the total number of USCGA applicants, it would be reasonable to expect that the Admissions Division would need to employ additional resources to construct a class that meets the academic and military rigors of the USCGA curriculum. A CNP may lead to fewer applicants because of the perceptions of it being an additional hurdle in the application process.

Impacts on the Composition of USCGA's Corps of Cadets, Including Diversity

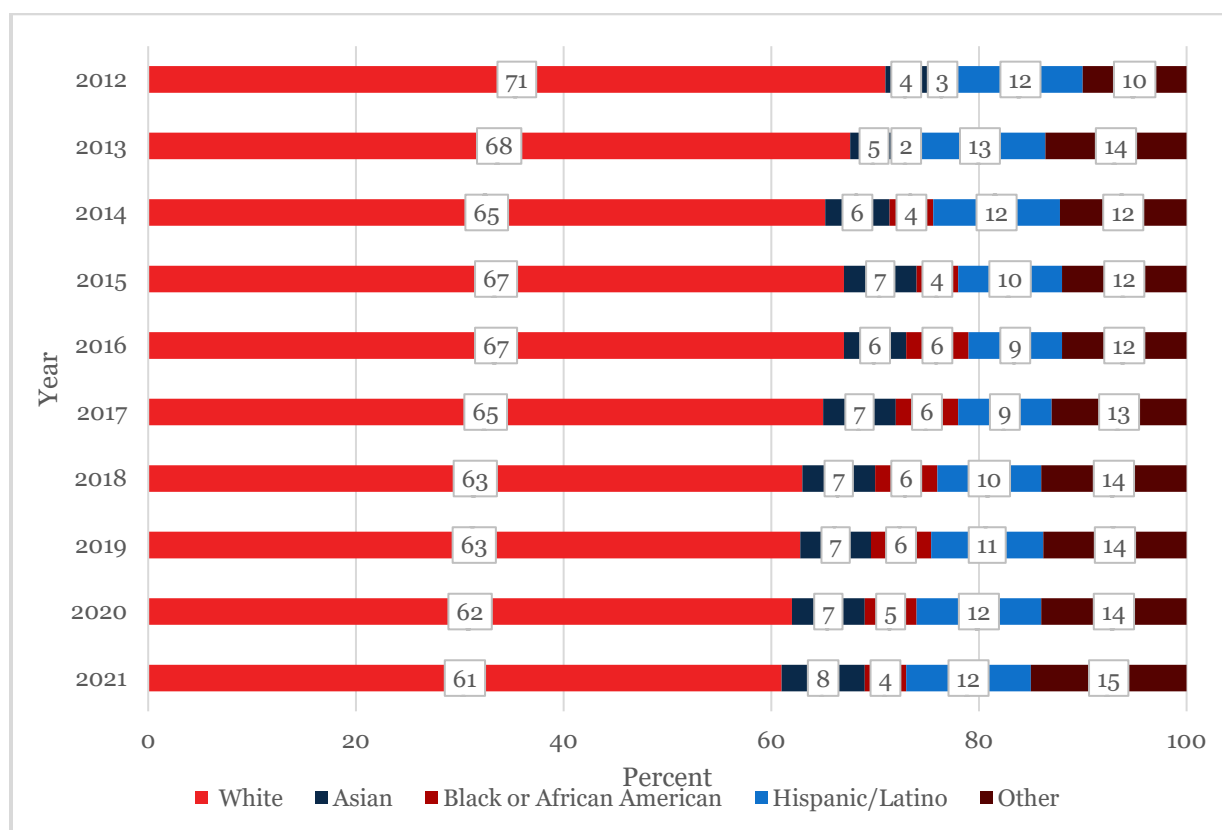
The CNP's primary benefit is that it could potentially increase the geographic diversity of the cadet body. The DoD academies routinely succeed in including students from all, or nearly all, states. Even without a CNP, however, USCGA's classes typically include cadets from 90 percent or more of the states. Unlike other military services that have operating units in all states, the USCG has operating units in 37 of the 50 states, which may lead to a lower level of familiarity with the Service in some states. Even so, USCGA regularly has a high percentage of states represented in its Corps of Cadets.

Regarding gender and race, the CNP has not yielded a demonstrably more diverse corps of cadets at the other service academies compared to the USCGA. There are no explicit instructions from the U.S. Code directing members to consider diversity as a factor in determining how to allocate their nominations; some members may consider diversity in allocating nominations, while others

may not. Indeed, congressional concern with diversity results at the other academies led to the PANORAMA Act.⁵⁹

Without a CNP, USCGA faces fewer constraints in shaping its incoming classes. The Admissions Division can form the class with a mix of academic, extracurricular, and personal backgrounds without allocating a set number of spots reserved for applicants with nominations. Although USCGA does not have a CNP, its Corps of Cadets' gender, racial, and ethnic diversity is greater than or equal to the other academies (as shown in Chapter 2). Figure 11 provides the racial and ethnic diversity of the USCGA Corps of Cadets over ten years.

Figure 11. USCGA Corps of Cadets Racial and Ethnic Diversity (2012-2021)



Source: IPEDS⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD-4) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) co-sponsored the original PANORAMA Act. In a [May 26, 2020, press release](#) about the act, Rep. Brown said, “Increasing transparency in the academy nominations process will ensure qualified candidates do not go overlooked as we build the next generation of military leadership. A range of backgrounds and experiences in leadership brings out the best in our military, and ensures that everyone who wants to serve their country in uniform, can do so.” In the same press release, Sen. Gillibrand said: “I am proud to sponsor this legislation calling for a transparent and inclusive academy nominations process that will help ensure every student has an equal chance to serve, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Our future military leaders should highlight a fundamental truth—our diversity is our strength.”

⁶⁰ Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), U.S. Coast Guard Academy enrollment data. IPEDS counts any student identifying as Hispanic or Latino, an ethnicity, as Hispanic or Latino regardless

Thus far, no compelling evidence indicates that a CNP would significantly enhance USCGA's cadet diversity from present levels.

Impacts on Applicants' Experience

Even without a CNP, prospective USCGA cadets must navigate an extensive application process, including several components common to the federal service academies: a physical fitness exam and a medical examination. A requirement (or even an option) to solicit a congressional nomination would add another burden of effort and paperwork to apply to the USCGA. While a CNP may not deter some applicants, it may create a barrier for others.

As noted in Figures 2 and 3 in Chapter 2, the USCGA has demonstrated that it can reach a demographically diverse group of candidates without the added requirements of engaging with a member's office.

Impacts on USCGA Engagement with Congressional Offices

Introducing a CNP to USCGA might enhance relationships between USCGA and congressional offices. While members may function as additional recruitment support for USCGA, some members' offices regularly invite USCGA to service academy events for interested students and their parents or guardians, indicating that USCGA Admissions has an established relationship with some members' offices. A CNP would require USCGA to educate all members and their staff on the Coast Guard and USCGA.

Introducing a CNP to USCGA would likely increase congressional offices' work, adding to the workload already undertaken for nominations to other academies.

Impacts on Administration

Unlike other military service academies, a CNP poses a challenge in determining which nominees would earn USCGA admission due to its small class size of approximately 275 cadets. With 535 members of Congress, it could not reasonably accept a nominee annually from every member.⁶¹ Space constraints in campus facilities and the Service's needs for approximately 250 ensigns each year limit the USCGA class size.

If a CNP were adopted at USCGA, the applicant pool might change. However, the direction of change is indeterminate.

If a CNP increased the total number of applicants, the Admissions Division's workload would increase. USCGA Admissions Division reviews 100 percent of completed applications through the support of volunteer faculty and staff on their Cadet Candidate Evaluation Boards. With an

of if they identify as another race. This chart includes the following racial demographics in the Other category: American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Race/Ethnicity Unknown, Nonresident Alien, and Two or More Races.

⁶¹ USMMA, which is a similar size to USCGA, does not face an issue with the number of congressional nominations because the school does not regularly receive the full quantity of nominations allowable by the U.S. Code. Some members of Congress only submit a fraction of the total nominations they are allowed. A small portion of members often submits no nominations to USMMA. The USMMA does not receive enough nominations to fill its classes.

increase in applications, USCGA Admissions would likely need to identify additional faculty and staff to review the added application volume to maintain this standard of review. USCGA Admissions might also need to increase staffing in the Admissions Division to manage an increase in inquiries connected with the CNP. For reference, USCGA Admissions reviewed 1,749 completed applications for selection to the Class of 2026 and admitted 293 U.S. students.⁶²

Conclusion on the Question to Require a Congressional Nomination Process

Weighing the advantages and challenges of introducing a CNP into the USCGA admissions process, arguments opposing a CNP at USCGA are more compelling than those supporting the CNP. Introducing a CNP to the Academy would present administrative challenges, particularly given the Academy's smaller size. The Academy has also been as successful, and in some cases more successful, in admitting more gender- and racially-diverse classes than the other service academies. Introducing a CNP to the Academy is unlikely to yield significant increases in the geographic or racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its Corps of Cadets. Furthermore, there is no evidence that introducing such a requirement would enhance the USCG's ability to carry out its primary duties.

While the Academy does not have all 50 states represented in each class, admission is offered yearly to students from all 50 states. Approximately 90 percent or more of states are represented in the Academy's classes during the most recent several years. Although each class year may not have every state represented, over the last ten years, the Corps of Cadets has included representation from all 50 states across the four classes of cadets. The Admissions Division incorporates strategies into its recruiting plan to raise the number of applications received from some non-coastal states.

Introducing a CNP to the Academy's process would also likely hinder its ability to target and shape a diverse class that fulfills the Academy's needs for its academic disciplines and athletic teams.

USCGA has eligibility requirements beyond those of a non-service academy institution, and the college admissions environment will become increasingly competitive in the years ahead. Introducing a CNP to the USCGA's admissions process would further constrain the Academy in shaping its incoming classes. Four circumstances indicate that the best course of action is to allow USCGA to continue to build a diverse corps of cadets without a nominations process:

- USCG leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to building a diverse Corps of Cadets.
- USCGA is a smaller service academy, posing logistical challenges to implementing a CNP.
- USCGA has a track record of advancing diversity objectives.
- A CNP would present additional hurdles for the Admissions Division.

DHS and Congress should continue oversight to maintain accountability, which is how the USCGA and USCG already engage with DHS and Congress.

⁶² USCGA Admissions Division data on the USCGA Class of 2026.

Recommendation 4.1: The Coast Guard should not take action to adopt a congressional nomination requirement.

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Chapter 5: Organizational Issues

Section 8272 of the Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act requires this report to address whether the USCGA Admissions Director (AD) should be a civilian or military officer. This chapter provides an overview of the USCGA AD position and its history and highlights the competencies necessary to operate an admissions division. Additionally, this chapter describes the AD arrangements at other service academies, provides an overview of admissions division programming and partnerships, and weighs the benefits of a military officer or civilian AD.

Admissions Director Position Description and its History

The AD directs recruitment, outreach, marketing, application review, and selection of incoming USCGA and Coast Guard Academy prep school classes to support the annual U.S. Coast Guard officer accession plan. The AD oversees the coordination, management, and logistics of over 7,700 visitors annually and USCGA recruiting programs, including the Academy Introductory Mission (AIM). In addition, the AD leads a 22-member staff and works alongside senior Academy leaders and the admissions committee to achieve USCGA admissions goals (See Appendix E for Director of Admissions Position Description).

The responsibilities of an AD are expansive, requiring knowledge of both military and higher education admissions. The most prominent roles are managing the admission division and liaising between various offices, academic departments, and senior leadership. The AD also has an outward-facing role as a spokesperson.

Since 1965, ADs have held the rank of captain. Until 2010, ADs served eight- to ten-year terms. The three most recent ADs have served for three or four years. Reducing the term was part of a Coast Guard retention effort. Previously, the Coast Guard had more qualified officers for captain-level positions than positions available. Therefore, the Coast Guard shortened the ADs term to allow more officers to cycle through captain-level positions to retain more officers.

Admissions Directors at Other Service Academies

The structure of the admissions divisions at other service academies varies. Not all ADs are active military personnel. Some ADs at the other service academies require a presidential appointment.

The United States Naval Academy (USNA) admissions division is led by a civilian AD. The AD at the USNA leads a staff of 47. The AD is a retired Navy Captain who, before his current term, served as an AD of USNA before retiring and then was asked to return to the position. The USNA is the second largest service academy, with a population of 4,528 midshipmen.⁶³

The United States Military Academy (USMA) admissions division is led by a military AD. The USMA AD leads a staff of 44. The USMA is the largest service academy, with a cadet population

⁶³ US News & World Report. "United States Naval Academy Overall Rankings." Accessed January 18, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/united-states-naval-academy-2101/overall-rankings>.

of 4,594.⁶⁴ The position requires a presidential appointment and is tenured, allowing the AD to stay in their role until retirement.

The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) admissions division is also led by a presidentially-appointed military AD. Like USMA, the USAFA AD position is tenured, allowing the AD to stay in their role until retirement. USAFA's AD leads a staff of 69. The USAFA has a cadet population of 4,181.⁶⁵

The United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) admissions division is led by a civilian AD. The USMMA AD leads a staff of 12. The USMMA is the smallest service academy, with a population of 1,029.⁶⁶

Advantages of Having a Military Officer Serve as Admissions Director

The USCGA is positioned to serve the role of a degree-granting institution and training program for emerging leaders in the Coast Guard, requiring both an understanding of the responsibilities of military institutions and higher education. The role of the AD is critical as they lead the efforts to construct USCGA classes that later graduate and become officers.

There are several benefits of having an officer serve as an AD. A uniformed AD garners respect and connects prospective candidates to aspirations of becoming an officer. A uniformed AD can speak with authority and institutional experience, as they have either gone through the admission process themselves or have previous experience navigating military institutions. Additionally, a tenured military AD (as exemplified by the USAFA and USMA) can build long-term and consistent partnerships while attaining competencies necessary for the admissions role.

The value of military institutional knowledge is critical when serving as a spokesperson for an admissions division at a service academy. The Coast Guard uniform symbolizes service and institutional knowledge and garners respect from various critical stakeholders at first encounter.

Advantages of Having a Civilian Serve as Admissions Director

The college admissions profession is complicated and technical. Successful ADs hold specific higher education competencies and proficiencies necessary to lead an admissions division. Professionals in higher education often spend their entire careers developing requisite skills, experience, and a professional network in this field. Experts in higher education emphasize the benefit of a civilian AD by highlighting the opportunity to bring years of expertise in higher education, data analytics, marketing, networking connections, and admissions training to the USCGA. As there is no current training or career path for ADs within the Coast Guard, a military officer is not likely to begin work as the Academy AD with the requisite skills. On the other hand,

⁶⁴ US News & World Report. "United States Military Academy at West Point Overall Rankings." Accessed January 18, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/west-point-2893/overall-rankings>.

⁶⁵ US News & World Report. "United States Air Force Academy Overall Rankings." Accessed January 20, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/united-states-air-force-academy-1369/overall-rankings>.

⁶⁶ US News & World Report. "United States Merchant Marine Academy Overall Rankings." Accessed January 18, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/us-merchant-marine-2892/applying>.

a competent civilian AD will have academic degrees, certificates, experience, and training to lead an admissions division.

Furthermore, due to the current structure of the AD position, a military AD is limited by a three- to four-year tour within the USCGA's Admissions Division. The ADs at other institutions and previous USCGA Admissions Directors have mentioned a development period of at least one to two years to understand the basics of the role, anticipate and navigate admissions challenges, and proactively build partnerships. Incoming ADs at USCGA may have only a month or two to shadow a predecessor before taking on the role. In contrast, a civilian could come into the position with extensive knowledge of college admissions and the admissions cycle. During onboarding, they could then focus on becoming familiar with USCGA-specific requirements.

On the other hand, a civilian may not have military experience or an in-depth understanding of the USCG's unique culture and operating requirements. Onboarding should also address knowledge gaps and climatize a civilian AD to work well with military leaders and understand USCG's goals in preparing its future leaders.

Finally, the short term of a military AD can disrupt the division's partnerships and planning, as outlined in a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (see Chapter 6, Other Actions). Admissions experts noted the importance of consistency and continuity when building long-term relationships with community-based organizations, high schools, and admissions partners. A civilian AD could have a much longer term.

Considerations for Selecting Admissions Division Leaders

AACRAO Competencies and Proficiencies

In response to the research question of whether the AD should be a military officer or a civilian, this report approaches the research question with a broad view of the skills and experience needed to succeed. A highly-respected national association in this field—the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), has identified the expertise and skillsets admissions officers need to succeed.⁶⁷ The competencies and proficiencies are described below.

This analysis argues that rather than the AD alone, the Admissions Division leadership team—defined as the AD and the Deputy AD—should have these competencies and proficiencies. In addition to being a degree-granting institution of higher education, USCGA is a military service Academy with close ties to USCG. The ability to operate in both realms is vital. This approach is consistent with current operations, where the AD is military, the Deputy AD is civilian, and both play vital roles. It is also consistent with how organizations generally strive to benefit from synergies among their leadership staff, with some individuals having certain skills and experience and others filling in gaps with complementary ones. Finally, this analytical approach accommodates an important and unique feature vital for this assessment: both of these

⁶⁷ American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. Home. Accessed January 18, 2023. <https://www.aacrao.org/>.

dimensions are important to embed in the analysis of this question in order to evaluate critical issues and arrive at a sound recommendation.

AACRAO frequently pairs competencies and proficiencies throughout its resources. The differentiating terminology serves to organize sets of knowledge within AACRAO resources. AACRAO, which works with an array of higher education professionals, has created a set of core competencies that all individuals in higher education should exhibit (see Figure 12). Furthermore, it has created a list of specific proficiencies for admissions professionals (see Figure 13).

Figure 12. AACRAO Competencies for Higher Education Professionals

AACRAO Competencies	
COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Change Management</i>	Identify the need for implementing a change within the organization based on data analysis and environmental scans, define the scope of the change, and provide the leadership required to execute the change. Develop coalitions necessary to guide and support the change. Communicate the need and urgency for change to the campus community and plan how to execute a communication plan to keep the campus community informed about the status of the change.
<i>Collaborative Decision-Making</i>	Ability to facilitate the processes needed to facilitate stakeholders' involvement, through the stages of collective and effective solutions.
<i>Diversity & Inclusion</i>	Admissions, registrar, and enrollment management professionals value and foster an environment that ensures respect, support and safety for all members of their campus and professional communities, and actively promote the expansion of ideas, perspectives, and understanding that comes from a diverse and inclusive community.
<i>Holistic and Systematic Thinking</i>	Employs the ability to view the institutional culture and operations, holistically and systemically. Has a working knowledge and understanding of the applications of systemic thinking principles to the academic and service mission, goals and values of the institution.
<i>Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data</i>	Understanding of Institutional and External data in the context of what impact the data has on the Strategic Enrollment goals of the institution. To be able to interpret and apply the data for short term and long-range planning and strategizing Understanding of institutional and external data in the context of what impact the data has on the long-term Strategic Enrollment goals of the institution and to monitor short-term operations. To be able to interpret and apply the data for the purposes of short term and long-range planning and strategizing. Uses data to support decision-making

<i>Leadership and Management</i>	<p>and creates a culture of evidence for achievement of short and long-term objectives.</p> <p>Ability to identify the functions and business processes necessary to operate an office, develop an operating budget, and build a professional staff to conduct the activities of the office. Ability to identify utilization and operationalize customer and student services best practices.</p>
<i>Problem Solving</i>	<p>Employs an analytical and creative approach to address problems, while drawing on individual & collective skills, knowledge & experience.</p>
<i>Professional Integrity</i>	<p>Ability to carry out professional activities in an honest, professional and ethical manner. To engender a climate of trust and fairness in all dealings with students and colleagues within and outside the institution.</p>
<i>Communication</i>	<p>The set of abilities enabling a person to interact positively and work effectively with others. Development of the interpersonal skills of employees is a key goal of training and development initiatives for many companies and is considered a constructive manner in which to handle office disputes and other personnel issues. These skills include the areas of communication, listening, delegation of tasks and leadership.</p>
<i>Technological Knowledge</i>	<p>The ability to possess the appropriate technological knowledge and skills to function as a successful enrollment services professional.</p>
<i>Professional Development and Contributions to the Field</i>	<p>Support professional development for oneself and others in order to advance sound academic and enrollment services practice, foster innovation, and remain attuned to issues affecting higher education. This includes presenting at state, regional, or national conferences; contributing to professional association and academic journals; serving on professional association committees and leadership teams; and collaborating with colleagues through partnerships, conference attendance, and related activities.</p>

Source: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

Figure 13. AACRAO Proficiencies for Admissions Professionals

AACRAO Proficiencies	
PROFICIENCY	DESCRIPTION
Reporting Progress Towards Enrollment Goals	Develop reports to help inform faculty and higher administration of progress toward achieving enrollment goals
Strategic Staffing and Organization	Evaluate the staffing structure of the admissions office and identify the optimal configuration to complete necessary tasks and meet the enrollment goals of the institution. This would include the ability to anticipate workloads and appropriately deploy staff with an understanding of the admissions decision process, operational effectiveness, and application processing.
Emerging Technologies	Research and evaluate emerging technologies in the admissions field and, in collaboration with other enrollment units and IT, develop strategies to implement and deploy solutions that improve business processes and student satisfaction.
Market Analysis	Analyze the enrollment landscape for your institution and develop a recruitment plan to help reach your enrollment goals. This includes utilizing search tools to develop a prospect base (such as PSAT and AP), conducting outreach visits to high schools and community colleges, selecting appropriate recruitment fairs both in and out of state- including international, and identifying opportunities to deploy students, faculty, alumni and other potential recruiters.
Communications Plan	Develop short and long-term strategic communications plans that deliver key messages to the right audience at the right time using multi-dimensional approaches to student recruitment. Implement robust communication plans at each stage in the enrollment process from prospect to applicant to admitted student to enrolled. Work with faculty and other campus constituents to develop focused communications plans.
Social Media Utilization	Understand social media and develop strategies to integrate it into your recruitment and communication plan.
Speeches and Presentations	Develop speeches and presentations that highlight institutional strengths and encourage students to enroll or convey crucial information to other stakeholders on or off campus. These should include a variety of formats that can be delivered to students, parents, counselors, and others, from individual and small group settings to large assemblies.

Source: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

Recommendation 5.1:

The Coast Guard should:

- allow the Admissions Director (AD) to remain in the position beyond a standard tour length; and
- formalize training and preparation requirements for a military officer who serves in one of the AD leadership roles.

Recommendation 5.2:

The Coast Guard Academy should:

- ensure that the AD and Deputy AD, combined, attain the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) competencies and proficiencies; and
- change the position descriptions to ensure they cover the AACRAO core competencies and proficiencies.

If the AD is to be a military officer, USCGA should consider:

- including a graduate degree or certificate program in the officer's professional development to prepare for the position.

If the AD is to be a civilian, candidates should:

- possess a strong ability to work within a military organization and harbor a profound respect for USCG; and
- maintain professional relationships in the higher education admissions community.

Current Admissions Division Staffing

Twenty-two staff members currently support the Admissions Director, including a Deputy AD and five admissions officers. The Deputy AD is a GS-14 employee who,⁶⁸ in consultation with the Admissions Director, serves as the subject matter expert in college admissions and is responsible for developing, coordinating, and executing USCGA's marking, communication, recruitment, and outreach plans in consultation with the AD. In the absence of an Admissions Director, the Deputy of Admissions has the responsibility and authority to perform all AD functions.

Admissions officers are commissioned officers who work within the USCGA Admissions Division for a three to four-year tour. Each admission officer is responsible for a specific geographic location across the United States and its territories: International (Foreign National), Mid-Atlantic, Western and Hawaii, Eastern and Puerto Rico, and Midwest and Canada (see Figure 14). The role of an Admissions Officer is to: host high school and community visitation events across the nation; create on and off-campus programming for interested cadets to engage with the

⁶⁸ GS-14 is the 14th level in the General Schedule (GS), the classification and pay system used to determine the salaries of many civilian government employees. The GS-14 pay grade is generally reserved for top-level positions such as supervisors, high-level technical specialists, and top professionals holding advanced degrees.

USCGA; run lecture series to assist interested cadets throughout the application process; and serve as a point of contact between the applicants and the USCGA's Admissions office.

Figure 14. Admissions Officer Territories Map



Source: U.S. Coast Guard Academy

The Admissions Division has intermittently increased resources in recent years. For fiscal years 2013-2017, Coast Guard Headquarters invested an additional \$1 million annually into diversity-related initiatives at USCGA. USCGA used the additional funds to establish and enhance its web presence, modernize the application process, improve printed media, support marketing efforts, expand CGAS initiatives, support the growth of the Academy Minority Outreach Team and the Academy Admissions Partner Program, and increase travel for admissions officers and partners.

In January 2020, USCGA hired the first of four short-term diversity outreach officers who served through April 2021.⁶⁹ The USCG funded these positions through September 2020, and USCGA covered the costs through April 2021. Their primary role was to increase quality interactions with potential applicants from underrepresented populations. They also provided strategic, logistical, and administrative support. The Admissions Division has not had funding for diversity outreach officers since April 2021. In January 2021, Coast Guard Recruiting Command (CGRC) began using a similar model, with four new officer recruiter billets to focus on Atlanta, Georgia; Hampton Roads, Virginia; Miami, Florida; and Washington, DC.

The Admissions Division had to adapt operations without the additional diversity outreach officers. USCGA's growing interest in improving diversity and the large number of applicants during the 2021 application cycle limited the time remaining staff members could spend preparing for future admissions cycles.

The Admissions Division provides programming to identify interested students, grow that interest, and expose interested applicants to other pathways to the Coast Guard. These efforts range from early high school students to applicant-age students. Despite frequently being

⁶⁹ Admissions division funded three of the four members out of annual funds from October 2020 until April 2021.

attributed as the introduction to the service, the Admissions Division continues to support the Coast Guard Recruiting Command by providing 3,000 names of potential recruits yearly, highlighting the value of the USCGA Admissions Division within the greater Coast Guard context.

Admissions Programming

The USCGA Admissions Division has created specific initiatives and partnerships to expand outreach to increase applicants during the admissions cycle. These initiatives include but are not limited to USCGA visitations, summer programming, and the formation of the Academy Minority Outreach Team.

General and Pre-application Outreach

The USCGA's Admissions team hosts various on-campus programming for school counselors, prospective cadets, and their families to engage throughout the application cycle. Before applying, prospective cadets and their families may receive admissions briefs and tours. Additionally, the USCGA provides day and overnight visitation programs for interested high school students through its Cadet for a Day and Bear Day programs.⁷⁰ Most notably, students entering their senior year of high school may apply for USCGA's Academy Introduction Mission (AIM) Summer Program. This one-week summer orientation program immerses high school seniors into Academy life. The USCGA regards the program as "the most realistic of the service academy summer orientation programs."⁷¹ The AIM Summer Program is offered three times throughout the summer, and high school students must apply to it during their junior year of high school. To further assist through the application cycle, the admission office hosts Academy Virtual Spotlight sessions, a series of online discussions covering various admissions topics. Prospective cadets are encouraged to attend these meetings if they are interested in learning more about the USCGA experience.

Programming Focused on Diversity

The USCGA created the Academy Minority Outreach Team (AMOT) in 2013 to prioritize diversity throughout the admissions process. The AMOT is composed of volunteers of current cadets, Academy graduates, and active-duty military personnel who share their educational career and life experiences with prospective cadets. The AMOT aims to help new cadets make a seamless transition to Academy life by providing informal mentorship and resources. Additional efforts that focus on increasing the diversity of the applicant pool can be noted through the Genesis invitational program, Science Technology Engineering Program (STEP), and the USCGA partnership with various affinity-specific college fairs. The Genesis Invitational is an overnight program for prospective students of color and first-generation college students of color to engage with the USCGA. The STEP is a day-long visit for female high school students focusing on the opportunities and challenges of earning a technical degree. Due to the USCGA's focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, the STEP empowered female high school students to pursue a degree in science, math, or engineering. STEP allows female high school students to meet with current cadets, admissions staff, and faculty. The Admissions

⁷⁰ Objee the Bear is the mascot of the Coast Guard Academy.

⁷¹ United States Coast Guard Academy, "AIM," January 18, 2023. <https://uscga.edu/admissions/aim/>.

Division frequently partners with affinity-specific college fairs, such as Black College Expo Fairs and Hispanic College Fairs, and with the National Association of College Admissions Counseling to provide online and in-person opportunities for various communities to engage with the USCGA Admissions Division.

Programming for Accepted Students

The Admissions Division continues to engage prospective cadets once they are accepted to increase enrollment, hosting the Academy Experience Program, International Orientation, and the Respect and Inclusion Summer Experience (RISE). The Academy Experience Program is an overnight orientation for admitted students. The International Orientation is a four-day orientation for matriculating international cadets immediately before cadets report to Swab Summer. Similarly, the RISE Program is an early arrival program intended for first-generation students (whose parents did not attend college), students of color, first-time visitors, and their parents to arrive two days before cadets report to Swab Summer.

Force Multipliers

The Admission Division partners with various groups to multiply their efforts and expand their reach throughout the admissions cycle. These “force multipliers” include current cadets and faculty, athletic coaches, the USCGA Parent Association, the Alumni Association, and the Academy Admissions Partner Program.

Current cadets participating in athletics or arts programs may serve as informal admissions ambassadors by sharing their experiences at the USCGA while traveling nationwide for events. The USCGA emphasizes the role of athletics in its leadership development; 77 percent of cadets participate in varsity or club sports.⁷² Athletic coaches also serve as force multipliers when recruiting for the Academy’s twenty-two varsity teams.

The USCGA formalized a leave extension program during the cadets’ Thanksgiving break to assist with recruitment. Known as the R-leave program, it rewards eligible cadets with an early start to their Thanksgiving break, enabling them to return to high schools in their hometown to promote the USCGA experience and recruit. Faculty and staff at the USCGA serve as additional support to the admission division when reviewing applications and hosting on-campus events. Faculty serve on the admissions committee and the Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board.

Faculty and staff participate in on-campus admissions events to help prospective cadets learn more about their academic major and campus and student life. The USCGA’s Alumni Association and Parent Association have local chapters nationwide that host events to support alums, current cadets, and prospective cadets. The Academy Admissions Partner Program formalizes partnerships between the Admissions Division and parents, active duty military, auxiliary, alumni, and current students.

Force multipliers are critical to expanding the reach of the admissions division, but the force multipliers are mostly volunteers. The number of volunteers varies annually, complicating planning efforts. Coordination from the Admissions Division across all volunteer groups is

⁷² United States Coast Guard Academy, “Athletics,” March 1, 2023. <https://uscga.edu/athletics/>.

necessary to meet recruitment goals. Recruitment at the USCGA may require force multipliers to engage with prospective candidates regularly. Recruitment efforts can begin as early as middle school due to the USCGA's requirements to complete calculus, physics, and chemistry courses before applying to the USCGA.

Recommendation 5.3: The Coast Guard should expand the Academy's staff to strengthen nationwide outreach efforts, particularly for underrepresented populations.

With the addition of Diversity Outreach Officers, the Academy should consider the following:

- Adding an administrative professional to support the functions of the Admissions Division and allow Admissions Officers to focus their efforts on recruiting.
- Identifying ways to further develop personal connections with students from underrepresented populations.

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Chapter 6: Other Actions

This chapter addresses three areas of the Admissions Division's operations where opportunities exist for improving Admissions performance. Recommendations relate to strategy, marketing, and considering a shared application portal for all federal service academies.

Strategy

Currently, the Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) Admissions Division operates with a one-year recruiting plan that outlines annual objectives, recruitment goals, and major tasks of the Admissions Division branches. The Admissions Division is guided not only by this one-year plan but also by the compelling interests laid out by the USCGA Board of Trustees and Superintendent (see Figure 15 below),⁷³ the USCGA mission, and USCG mandates. The USCG mandates that USCGA graduate at least 250 ensigns annually, provides a strong STEM-focused degree to graduates, and contributes to diversifying the USCG officer corps. These mandates can be found in the USCG Strategic Vision for 2019-2023 and the USCG Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for 2019-2023.⁷⁴

Figure 15. USCGA Compelling Interests

Diversify the Corps of Cadets to enrich the educational environment and the future of the Coast Guard. Support Commandant's diversity and inclusion goals by employing key initiatives to increase the pool of well qualified underrepresented minority applicants.

Sustain a cadet corps with high academic performance, capable of meeting USCGA's mission statement and fulfilling the Service's need for engineering and mathematics graduates.

Sustain a competitively successful Intercollegiate and NCAA Division III varsity athletic program for both men and women.

Source: USCGA Admissions Division Recruiting Plan⁷⁵

As discussed in Chapter 3, the higher education recruitment environment is becoming increasingly smaller and more competitive, posing new challenges for admissions offices around the country. The USCGA is susceptible to these challenges. In fact, these challenges are amplified for the Coast Guard given the increasingly lower percentage of young Americans interested in

⁷³ These compelling interests are shaped annually by the USCGA Board of Trustees and are signed off on by the USCGA Superintendent.

⁷⁴ United States Coast Guard Academy Strategic Plan 2018-2023, https://uscga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USCGA_Strategic_Plan.pdf. United States Coast Guard Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2023, <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Portals/10/CG-1/diversity/DIAP/Diversity-and-Inclusion-Action-Plan.pdf?ver=2020-06-25-153724-670>.

⁷⁵ The USCGA Admissions Division Recruiting Plan is a private document.

military service and eligible for service academy consideration (i.e., academically, physically, and medically fit).

In response to the growing complexities of the recruiting environment, coupled with constrained resources, higher education institutions are approaching the increasingly competitive student market with more finely honed strategic focus, utilizing data analytics, greater synchronization of efforts within each university, and laser-focused marketing strategies geared to target markets. These multi-dimensional efforts are directed toward developing Strategic Enrollment Management plans.

Purpose of a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

Higher education institutions are increasingly adopting Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plans to better prepare for future challenges in the college enrollment environment. A SEM plan helps an institution “identify, recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate a student body in accordance with an institution’s mission and goals while also maintaining fiscal sustainability.”⁷⁶ A SEM plan links admissions operations with the enrollment, marketing, and data collection functions. Linking admissions with these other functions unifies major campus divisions behind common goals and allows the institution to prioritize its limited resources.

A SEM plan sets a longer-term strategy, typically about three to five years, that incorporates the institution’s mission, vision, and other strategies. The process of developing a SEM plan provides the opportunity to “analyze forces impacting the enrollment landscape, assess the potential market segments to determine return on investment (ROI), and prioritize high ROI opportunities to hit enrollment goals,”⁷⁷ which includes prioritizing limited resources.

Entities Involved in Developing a SEM Plan

A team to spearhead developing a SEM plan is needed to ensure that the plan does not become a lower priority. The group responsible for developing a SEM plan is typically small and may range between five and ten people. The group should include representation from the major divisions and offices responsible for enrollment, retention, marketing, and data analysis. This smaller group is the primary body responsible for developing the SEM plan, but representatives from other offices may be brought in to support the development of the SEM plan at various points. For example, the retention component of the SEM plan may be spearheaded by a vice provost of student or academic affairs, but during the development of the SEM plan, offices like those responsible for academic advising, incident response, or facilities may participate in meetings when appropriate.

The SEM plan working group should not be headed by the top leader of the institution but rather should involve leadership at appropriate intervals to ensure that the plan is aligned with institutional strategy and vision. Leadership endorsement and focus from the highest level are critical to the success of a SEM plan and building momentum to use it appropriately.

⁷⁶ “Strategic Enrollment Management Planning,” The Society for College and University Planning, <https://www.scup.org/planning-type/strategic-enrollment-management-planning/>.

⁷⁷ “Strategic Enrollment Management Plan Framework,” EAB, <https://eab.com/research/community-college/toolkit/strategic-enrollment-management-plan-framework/>.

Practices for Successful SEM Plan Implementation

To successfully implement a SEM plan, the SEM plan leadership must work to build community trust. It is essential to have the campus community aware of the SEM plan's purpose so that the various members of the community understand the institution's goals and their roles in working toward those goals.

Establishing trust with the campus community requires a lot of communication. While the group requiring the most frequent communication is the smaller team working on the SEM plan, it is also important to provide venues to listen to the campus community and solicit feedback. These venues may include town halls, drop-in sessions, or surveys. Communicating the intention of the SEM plan to various audiences at different levels of detail allows the campus community to be aligned with the institution's recruitment and student success goals.

Components of a SEM Plan

While a SEM plan is tailored to a higher education institution's unique circumstances, SEM plans include several common components. Figure 16 below identifies the components of a SEM plan and contrasts them with the components of an annual enrollment—or recruiting—plan.

Figure 16. Components of a Strategic Enrollment Management and Annual Enrollment Plans

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan
<i>Table of Contents:</i> Subjects covered in the plan with page numbers.
<i>Introduction:</i> A statement of purpose of the plan, the years covered (typically three to five years), and a description of the process used to develop it.
<i>Executive Summary:</i> Summary of goals, assumptions, and key strategies
<i>Departmental Mission, Vision, and Goals:</i> A statement reflecting the division's mission, vision, philosophy, and goals.
<i>Environmental Scan:</i> A comprehensive scan of the external and internal environmental trends and realities – could be written as a SWOT analysis (internal strengths and weaknesses and external threats and opportunities).
<i>Planning Assumptions:</i> A list of the basic assumptions regarding external and internal forces that will affect outcomes and planned performance during the planning period.
<i>Competition Study:</i> A description of the key competitors and their strengths and weaknesses. A competitor is defined as an institution with whom your institution shares cross-applications and where your institution wins sometimes and loses sometimes. Another institution that wins the student nearly all the time is not a competitor.
<i>Enrollment Goals:</i> Clear enrollment goals for each year of the planning period, including relevant enrollment distributions and profile goals.

List of Key Strategies: Using the 80/20 rule where 80% of the intended outcome is derived from 20% of the effort, key strategies represent the initiatives that matter most in the achievement of goals—usually, there are not more than 12 or 15 key strategies.

Organizational Structure for Leadership and Implementation of the Plan: A divisional organization chart and description of the structure, roles, and responsibilities for plan implementation.

Annual Enrollment Plan

Table of Contents: Subjects covered in the plan with page numbers.

Situation Analysis: Relevant facts, trends, and information on the present situation that provide a context for the plan.

Funnel and Enrollment Goals: Clear funnel and enrollment goals for the upcoming year, including relevant enrollment distributions and profile goals.

Key Strategies: List of key enrollment strategies around which the action plans will be developed.

Action Plans: Specific tactics/activities that will lead to the full and effective implementation of each strategy. Action plans include a description of the tactic or activity, measurable objectives, implementation timetable, assignment of responsibility, resources or budget needed, and control/evaluation measures that will be used to monitor and assess progress toward goals.

Summary of Resources Needed for Plan Implementation: The final section of the plan should summarize the resources needed (e.g., fiscal, personnel, equipment, etc.) to successfully implement the plan.

Source: Thomas E. Williams & Company

Application of a SEM Plan to USCGA

The Academy could benefit from implementing a SEM plan, as the benefits of such a plan would span the entire institution—not just the Admissions Division. USCGA could benefit from greater strategy integration across the recruitment, enrollment, marketing, and data collection functions. A SEM plan can unify the divisions supporting these functions. The divisions that would be involved are the Admissions Division, Academic Division, Athletics Division, Cadet Division, Office of Institutional Research, Office of External Affairs, and others. Each entity has a crucial role in cadet recruitment and retention, institutional marketing, or data collection efforts. Together, these entities can inform a comprehensive SEM plan for USCGA.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Admissions Division operates with mandates and goals from several sources, including the USCGA Compelling Interests, the USCG 2022 Strategy, the USCG Strategic Vision for USCGA, and the Academy’s mission. All of these plans would need to be integrated into the SEM plan to continue fulfilling the Service’s and Academy’s goals.

Recommendation 6.1: The USCGA should develop and follow a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.

Marketing

The USCGA Admissions Division has a marketing branch led by an associate director for marketing and supported by a marketing specialist. The USCGA Admissions Division has also regularly contracted with a marketing consulting firm to further amplify its reach to different audiences. This marketing consulting firm assists the Admissions Division with some of its marketing functions, such as searching for students to build the inquiry pool. The firm also recently completed a social media audit for the Admissions Division, highlighting areas for improvements in its social media content and strategy.

There is an important nexus between the External Affairs teams at USCG and the Academy. To more comprehensively address the areas for improvement identified by the consulting firm and continue to raise USCGA's visibility, USCGA Admissions and the External Affairs Office will need to increase their social media presence and marketing capacity. Doing so will require additional funding or staff approved by USCG. As required by USCG policy, the USCGA External Affairs Office runs the institution-wide social media accounts for the Academy, like the Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn pages. The Admissions Division has a Facebook group for USCGA Scholars admitted students and a Vimeo account and will also post on the USCGA Facebook page and USCGA Parents Association Facebook group.⁷⁸

The External Affairs Office is increasing its productivity through various efforts, including modernized operations and communication integration across divisions.

The Coast Guard Academy's strategic communications plan identifies numerous audiences, including students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, congressional stakeholders, Service members, and the public. The External Affairs Office also creates and publishes content relevant to the audiences the Admissions Division aims to reach, including prospective and admitted students, their parents and guardians, other influencers, and people from underrepresented communities. Currently, much of the admissions-related content involves key dates for application cycles. However, the content of those communications can be further enhanced by focusing on key messages that data prove to be effective in reaching the Admissions Division's desired audiences. Tailored messaging to reach desired audiences is a proven strategy that works, and the Admissions Division and External Affairs Office should increase their partnership to develop content that resonates. Well-crafted social media content is essential to the Admissions Division's success because the accounts can broaden Admissions' reach to its intended audiences.

Recommendation 6.2: The Coast Guard should enhance the Academy's marketing capabilities to reach its target audiences.

⁷⁸ USCGA Scholars Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/uscgas/>. USCGA Vimeo account: <https://vimeo.com/uscgadmissions>. SCGA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CoastGuardAcademy>. SCGA Prospective Parent Facebook group: <https://facebook.com/groups/CGA.PA/>.

Options to enhance the Admissions Division's marketing capabilities with support from USCG include the following:

- The Admissions Division should arrange for additional social media support or otherwise enhance the social media function in partnership with the External Affairs Office.
- The Admissions Division and the Office of External Affairs should consider designating an Admissions Division liaison in the Office of External Affairs to focus on creating compelling admissions-related content that can appeal to both prospective students and other audiences (e.g., short videos, alumni stories, cadet stories).
- The Admissions Division and the Office of External Affairs should increase their coordination by sharing data-driven messages to develop compelling stories that reach the intended audiences.

The above options address the central point that the Admissions Division can benefit from greater attention, resources, and capacity for the social media and marketing function.

Considering a Shared Application Portal for Service Academies

The USCGA Admissions Division and its equivalent offices at the other federal service academies demonstrate a strong relationship between the admissions directors and offices, as exemplified by regular communication and formal meetings each year. All five academies work with limited resources and face the challenges of the increasingly competitive college admissions environment. Among the most pressing challenges is a declining youth population with an interest in serving in the military. Opportunities may exist to build on existing synergies between the offices.

One identified opportunity to further support the federal service academies' admissions offices is to consider developing a shared application portal in the near future to expand the five academies' visibility and streamline the application process.

Currently, none of the five service academies have migrated its application to the Common Application. Reasons for not migrating to the Common Application include the cost of adopting the program, not having enough staff to process and read a larger number of applications, and the likelihood that the academies will receive more applicants that may not be serious about enrolling at a service academy.

Instead, each academy has its own application portal to maintain and upgrade. Several academies have either recently updated their portals or are currently doing so. Therefore, this recommendation does not suggest that the academies develop a shared portal immediately. Instead, the recommendation calls for discussion among the academies' admissions offices, information technology offices, and other relevant parties to discuss the feasibility of developing a shared portal and identify ways to maximize such a portal's effectiveness.

A shared application portal for the academies presents several potential benefits. A shared application portal could:

- Raise the visibility of all federal service academies to young Americans with a proclivity for public and military service.

- Simplify the application process for applicants by allowing applicants to complete one standard profile and upload application components specific to certain academies.
- Gain potential economies of scale, such as information technology cost savings by consolidating five academies' application portals into one streamlined portal.

If the academies can determine a successful manner to create this portal, streamline applicants' experience, and manage admissions offices' workload, this recommendation poses several potential recruitment benefits.

Recommendation 6.3: In consultation with one another, the federal service academies should consider developing a shared application portal to expand academies' visibility and streamline the application process.

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Chapter 7: Conclusion

The USCG's goal is: "to recruit and retain a highly skilled total workforce that reflects the people we serve."⁷⁹ To achieve this goal, the USCGA focuses extensively on recruiting a diverse incoming class of about 270 cadets each year. While the class size may seem small, the challenges to building it are many. After all, a high school graduate who receives an appointment to the Academy must have a strong academic record, with particular attention to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and meet rigorous medical requirements. Along with these and other admissions hurdles, each candidate must commit to serve in the USCG for at least five years as an officer following graduation.

The Admissions Division's processes have, for the most part, met the needs of the USCG and the Academy to date. Demographic data provide evidence that policies and practices have yielded respectable results, achieving comparable or better racial and gender diversity compared with other federal service academies.

While the USCGA's admissions process has been performing adequately for now, future challenges looming ahead in the pool of qualified candidates argue for more investments, especially in terms of professionalizing and adopting a strategic enrollment management planning approach. The Admissions Division's recruitment programs, focused engagement, budgetary resource allocations, and program assessment practices demonstrate a clear commitment to enhancing diversity. The Academy's leaders, in close collaboration with the Service and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), are making progress toward meeting its diversity goal. This overall positive assessment is an important starting point for this report. The USCGA has a largely sound admissions infrastructure on which to build and address a changing future college admissions environment. To be sure, the pathway forward is challenging. Building an ever more diverse future officer corps will require continued commitment over time.

The second key point of this report focuses on the future challenges facing military service academy recruitment. The demographic trends outlined in Chapter 3 point to declining numbers of high school graduates and fewer potential students who can meet medical and fitness requirements or want to serve in the military. Ever-increasing competition to attract STEM students of color (in most cases, without a multi-year service commitment) has created a challenging environment in which the USCGA vies for a highly qualified, diverse Corps of Cadets. There is little or nothing USCGA, or any other university or academy for that matter, can demonstrably do to assuage this situation. In short, what has worked in recent years for the USCGA Admissions Division will not necessarily yield the same outcomes in the future.

The most salient findings of this report are future-oriented rather than focusing on the present. It is critical that USCGA promptly plans to adopt the seven recommendations encompassed in this report, devising implementation strategies to accommodate USCGA and USCG culture and policies while better positioning the Admissions Division for success. To weather growing

⁷⁹ USCG Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2023, <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Portals/10/CG-1/diversity/DIAP/Diversity-and-Inclusion-Action-Plan.pdf?ver=2020-06-25-153724-670>.

challenges, neither USCG nor the Coast Guard Academy can rely on moving forward with “business as usual” or doing the same thing as before with ever greater effort.

The most important recommendation of this report focuses on ensuring that those individuals (whether military or civilian) selected to serve as the Admission Director and/or the Deputy AD (the admissions leadership team) have the advanced skills, experience, and acumen needed to succeed in college admissions. Recommendations are based on the guidance of a respected nationwide association of admissions professionals.

Furthermore, should the USCG determine that an officer should hold one or both of the leadership positions in the Admissions Division, the report explores actions that DHS and USCG might take to enhance a longer-than-normal-term assignment to enhance leadership consistency and to take maximum advantage of having a competent, trained, and experienced officer in such an important position. Doing so will address concerns that a USCG officer has two-to-four-year assignments before being rotated to a new one, and new officers taking an admissions leadership position require several years to learn the basics of what is a complicated and life-long profession in college admissions.

Knowing that success in recruiting cadets from underrepresented populations typically requires more contacts and, thus, more resources, this report also calls for adding junior USCG officer staff members to the Admissions Division recruitment team. Additional resources were approved and funded from the fiscal year 2013 until the end of the fiscal year 2017 and during the calendar year 2020 but were subsequently withdrawn from USCGA. Given the recruitment challenges ahead, these positions should be approved without delay to concentrate on overall outreach, with a particular focus on enhancing the diversity of the Corps of Cadets.

The Admissions Division, in collaboration with the USCGA Senior Leadership Team, should introduce a long-term strategic planning effort that previously has not been a part of its operating rhythm. This report recommends that USCGA prepare a strategic enrollment management plan during the coming months. This plan can provide a longer-term strategic approach that benefits from input from all USCGA divisions, including academic, athletic, music, facilities, and so on. A focused, institution-wide strategy will be essential to building a Corps of Cadets that meets USCG’s goals.

There are a few other areas this report focuses on that merit further review by the Coast Guard, the Academy, and its Admissions Division and may result in actions that can yield improved outcomes. These recommendations focus on recruitment and marketing, including the use of social media.

The report urges USCGA to work with its military service academy counterparts to consider the merits of creating a common application that would be limited in scope to those high school graduates who seek to attend an academy that leads to mandatory military service. This special focus might enlarge the potential pool of candidates who have military service as a priority for higher education and an ensuing military service career.

Finally, this report recommends that a congressional nomination process not be introduced in the admissions process of the USCGA. There is no compelling evidence that applying such rules to this institution, roughly one-fourth the size of the other three military service academies, will

simplify and enhance the Academy’s ability to build a more diverse Corps of Cadets. Instead, adding a congressional nomination process might have the opposite effect by substantially increasing the workload of an already stretched USCGA staff.

The USCGA Admissions Division has a strong starting point for addressing the demographic and other challenges that will require important pivots in how it approaches recruiting a diverse Corps of Cadets. With the benefit of the recommendations provided in this report and considering the long-standing successful track record of the USCG identifying and overcoming obstacles on both land and sea, there is good reason to believe that this Academy can remain a reliable and competent source of the Service’s future leaders. And these leaders will increasingly look like the people the USCG serves regarding gender, race, ethnicity, and geographic diversity. And this diverse leadership cohort can continue to preserve and enhance what is already the best coast guard in the world.

Each of the report’s six recommendations is listed below:

Chapter 4: Congressional Nomination Process

- 4.1** The Coast Guard should not take action to adopt a congressional nomination requirement.
-

Chapter 5: Organizational Issues

- 5.1** The Coast Guard should:
- allow the Admissions Director (AD) to remain in the position beyond a standard tour length; and
 - formalize training and preparation requirements for a military officer who serves in one of the AD leadership roles.
- 5.2** The Coast Guard Academy should:
- ensure that the AD and Deputy AD, combined, attain the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) competencies and proficiencies; and
 - change the position descriptions to ensure they cover the AACRAO core competencies and proficiencies.
- 5.3** The Coast Guard should expand the Academy’s staff to strengthen nationwide outreach efforts, particularly for underrepresented populations.
-

Chapter 6: Other Actions

- 6.1** The Coast Guard Academy should develop and follow a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.
- 6.2** The Coast Guard should enhance the Academy’s marketing capabilities to reach its target audiences.
- 6.3** In consultation with one another, the federal service academies should consider developing a shared application portal to expand academies’ visibility and streamline the application process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021

Sections 8272 and 8274

SEC. 8272. COAST GUARD ACADEMY STUDY

(D) Restructure the admissions office of the Coast Guard Academy to be headed by a civilian with significant relevant higher education recruitment experience.⁸⁰

SEC. 8274. ASSESSMENT OF COAST GUARD ACADEMY ADMISSION PROCESSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating shall seek to enter into an arrangement with the National Academy of Public Administration under which the National Academy of Public Administration shall, not later than 1 year after submitting an assessment under section 8272(a), submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate an assessment of the Coast Guard Academy admissions process.

(b) ASSESSMENT SCOPE.—The assessment required to be sought under subsection (a) shall, at a minimum, include—

(1) a study, or an audit if appropriate, of the process the Coast Guard Academy uses to—

- (A) identify candidates for recruitment;
- (B) recruit applicants;
- (C) assist applicants in the application process;
- (D) evaluate applications; and
- (E) make admissions decisions;

(2) discussion of the consideration during the admissions process of diversity, including—

- (A) race;
- (B) ethnicity;
- (C) gender;
- (D) religion;
- (E) sexual orientation;

⁸⁰ The AD question was originally a part of the cultural competence study. Congress, DHS, and USCG mutually agreed to move the AD question to be part of the second year's study on the admissions process.

- (F) socioeconomic background; and
 - (G) geographic origin;
- (3) an overview of the admissions processes at other Federal service academies, including—
- (A) discussion of consideration of diversity, including any efforts to attract a diverse pool of applicants, in those processes; and
 - (B) an analysis of how the congressional nominations requirement in current law related to military service academies and the Merchant Marine Academy impacts those processes and the overall demographics of the student bodies at those academies;
- (4) a determination regarding how a congressional nominations requirement for Coast Guard Academy admissions could impact diversity among the student body and the ability of the Coast Guard to carry out effectively the Service’s primary duties described in section 102 of title 14, United States Code; and
- (5) recommendations for improving Coast Guard Academy admissions processes, including whether a congressional nominations process should be integrated into such processes.

Appendix B: Panel and Study Team Member Biographies

Panel of Academy Fellows

Dr. David Chu, Panel Chair: Dr. Chu is an Adjunct Senior Fellow with the Institute for Defense Analyses, from which he retired as president in 2020. His federal career included serving as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (2001-2009), Director then Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation (1981-1993), and Assistant Director of the Congressional Budget Office for National Security and International Affairs (1978-81). Dr. Chu served a tour of duty with the US Army and worked for the RAND Corporation, where his responsibilities included directing the Arroyo Center and RAND's Washington Office. He earned his Ph.D. in economics from Yale University.

Erik Bergrud: Erik Bergrud has devoted his professional career to higher education and public administration. During his nearly twenty-four years at Park University, he has held a range of positions with increasing responsibility. In his current role as Chief Strategic Communications Officer, he stewards the public face of the institution, oversees constituent-based communications, and advises the President and other members of the University community on communications strategy and opportunities while serving as an executive cabinet member. His peers elected him as an officer of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), ascending to the presidency in 2011. Previously, he held a senior position on the ASPA staff for seven years. As a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, Mr. Bergrud has participated in two study Panels and has chaired its Membership Committee. He has held chair or president positions in economic development, government relations, and international relations organizations. Mr. Bergrud serves as a public address/broadcast announcer for collegiate and professional athletic contests and community events.

Dr. Jennifer Brinkerhoff: Dr. Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff is a Professor of Public Administration and International Affairs at George Washington University. She holds a Ph.D. in public administration from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. She has published eight books, five co-edited journal issues, and over seventy articles and book chapters on topics ranging from the evaluation to NGOs, failed states, governance, and diasporas. Her most recent research focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially in American foreign policy. Dr. Brinkerhoff has consulted, conducted research, and advised studies for multilateral development banks, bilateral assistance agencies, NGOs, and foundations. Prior to her academic career, she worked on partnership, civil society development, development management, and training methodologies for the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank in Mali, China, Mongolia, Central Asia, and Russia. She won the 2021 Distinguished Scholar Award from the Ethnicity, Nationalism and Migration Studies Section of the International Studies Association; and the 2016 Fred Riggs Award for Lifetime Achievement in International and Comparative Public Administration from the American Society for Public Administration. She is an elected Fellow of the National Academy for Public Administration.

Michael Dominguez: Michael L. Dominguez recently retired from the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), where he served in several positions, including as the Director of the Strategy, Forces, and Resources Division, where he oversaw research into questions of military force sizing

and structure, military and civilian personnel policies, organizational efficiency, and defense institution building in developing nations. Prior to joining IDA, Mr. Dominguez was the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, where he made significant contributions to the Defense Department's programs for wounded warrior care, combatting sexual assault, integration of active and reserve forces, and development and deployment of a new civilian personnel management system. Mr. Dominguez also served as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, including duty as Acting Secretary of the Air Force. In addition to these two Senate-confirmed Presidential Appointments, Mr. Dominguez served in a number of civil service positions in the Department of the Navy and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where his responsibilities spanned program planning and resource allocation decision making, cost-effectiveness and efficient management of government programs, and development of the civilian career workforce. Mr. Dominguez is a veteran, having graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point, NY, and served in the Airborne Infantry in Europe.

Dr. Kyle Farmbry: Dr. Kyle Farmbry began serving as the 10th President of Guilford College on Jan. 1, 2022. Previously, Dr. Farmbry was Dean of the Graduate School at Rutgers University-Newark. Before joining the faculty of Rutgers, he taught at the University of Texas at San Antonio, San Diego State University, and Grand Valley State University. In 2017-18, Dr. Farmbry served as an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow. In this role, Dr. Farmbry worked with the Vice-Chancellor (President) of the University of Pretoria in South Africa and examined university-based innovation and the implementation of the University of Pretoria - Mamelodi Campus' anchor institution strategy. In May 2016, Dr. Farmbry launched the United States-South African Higher Education Network, an effort aimed at building enhanced collaboration between higher education institutions in South Africa and the United States. Dr. Farmbry received his B.A., M.P.A., and Ph.D. degrees from The George Washington University. Dr. Farmbry completed his J.D. degree at the Rutgers University School of Law.

Study Team

Brenna Isman, Director of Academy Studies. Ms. Isman has worked for the Academy since 2008 and provides oversight across the Academy's studies. She recently served as the Project Director for the Academy's project that assisted a national regulatory and oversight board in developing and implementing its strategic plan. She also recently directed the Academy's statutorily required assessments of NASA's use of its Advisory Council and the Environmental Protection Agency's practices for determining the affordability of regulatory mandates, as well as the Academy's organizational assessments of the U.S. State Department's Office of Inspector General and the Amtrak Office of the Inspector General. Ms. Isman has served as a Senior Advisor on strategic plan development for the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) and Social Security Administration (SSA) and organizational change consulting support for the Coast Guard. Her prior consulting experience includes both public and private sector clients in the areas of communication strategy, performance management, and organizational development. Prior to joining the Academy, Ms. Isman was a Senior Consultant for the Ambit Group and a Consultant with Mercer Human Resource Consulting facilitating effective organizational change and process improvement. She holds an MBA from American University and a Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Management from the University of Delaware.

Roger Kodat, *Senior Project Director*. Mr. Kodat has led more than 40 projects for the Academy. He brings twenty years of commercial and investment banking experience with JPMorgan Chase, and six years of senior-level federal government experience at the Department of the Treasury. Appointed by President George W. Bush in 2001 to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Treasury, he was responsible for Federal Financial Policy. Some of his tasks at Treasury included policy formulation for the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act; rule making and oversight of Federal loan and loan guarantee programs; and management of the Federal Financing Bank (a \$32 billion bank at that time). Mr. Kodat holds a BS in Education from Northwestern University and both a Master of Business Administration in Finance and a Master of Arts in Political Science from Indiana University.

Dr. Nancy Augustine, *Senior Advisor*. Dr. Augustine joined the Academy in January 2019 and was named Director of the Center for Intergovernmental Partnerships in July 2021. Dr. Augustine has led projects for the Legislative Branch, the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (DOT). She specializes in intergovernmental relations, public management, policy assessment, environmental and cultural resources protection, comprehensive and strategic planning, state and local fiscal issues, and planning for investments in facilities and infrastructure. She has conducted research for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Labor, the District of Columbia Auditor, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. Topics include affordable housing, housing finance policy, housing market trends, and state-level social support programs. She also worked in local government for ten years in long-range planning and policy development. Dr. Augustine has a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Public Administration from the George Washington University and has taught at the Trachtenberg School (George Washington University) since 2006. She also has an M.A. in Economics from Georgetown University and a Master of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia.

Elise Johnson, *Research Analyst*. Ms. Elise Johnson joined the Academy in 2019 and has conducted studies for nine different federal agencies and departments, including work for the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard Academy, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Department of Commerce. Ms. Johnson's focus areas include organizational transformation and change management, human capital, governance, and strategic planning. Before joining the Academy, Ms. Johnson earned a Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy, a Bachelor of Arts in Government & Politics, and a Spanish minor from the University of Maryland, College Park.

E. Jonathan Garcia, *Senior Research Associate*. Mr. Garcia has served on studies for numerous different federal and local agencies, including work for the Office of Personnel Management, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. Mr. Garcia's focus areas include organizational change management, strategic planning, and diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging (DEIAB). Previously, Jonathan served as a Research Intern with the Federal Trade Commission and a paralegal intern for Sughrue Mion PLLC and Zavos Junker Law Group. Mr. Garcia holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy, a Bachelor of Arts in Communication, and a minor in Law and Society from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Appendix C: List of Interviewees

During this study, the NAPA Study Team interviewed 34 individuals from the Coast Guard Academy, including:

- Twenty-six staff members, including individuals from the Senior Leadership Team, Admissions Division, Academic Division, Office of Inclusion and Diversity, Medical Division, and Loy Institute for Leadership. Staff members included commissioned service members, enlisted service members, and civilians.
- Eight faculty members, including individuals from the Academic Departments, Athletics Department, and Music Division.

The Study Team interviewed ten individuals from the United States Coast Guard, including six from Headquarters and two recently graduated ensigns.

To comply with the Department of Homeland Security Privacy Act policy, the names of individuals affiliated with the Coast Guard Academy, Coast Guard, and Department of Homeland Security are not listed.

Other Service Academies

The Study Team also met with five admissions officials from the U.S. Air Force Academy, two from the U.S. Military Academy, one from the U.S. Naval Academy, and one from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. These individuals are involved in the leadership and admissions at these service academies.

Admissions Experts

- **Jaime Briseño**, Senior Associate Director of Admissions, Georgetown University
- **Lindsey Ann Duble-Dice**, Director of Admissions for the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, George Washington University
- **Freeman Hrabowski**, Ph.D., President Emeritus, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- **David Hawkins**, Chief Education and Policy Officer, National Association of College Admission Counseling
- **Nathan Grawe**, Ph.D., Ada M. Harrison Distinguished Teaching Professor of the Social Sciences, Carleton College
- **Jeremy Hall**, Deputy Director and Chief of Market Research, Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS)
- **Ericka Matthews-Jackson**, Senior Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Wayne State University
- **Sherry Waldon-Wells**, Ed.D., Vice Provost, Lamar University

Strategic Enrollment Management Experts

- **April Crabtree**, Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management, University of San Francisco
- **Rhonda Kitch**, Ph.D., President, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

- **Jonathan Lindsay**, Vice President for Enrollment Management, Goucher College
- **Yvette Mozie-Ross**, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Planning, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- **Michele Sandlin**, Interim Associate Executive Director, Consulting and SEM, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
- **Tom Taylor**, Senior Consultant and Principal, EAB

National Academy of Public Administration Fellows

- **Thad Allen**, Admiral, USCG (Ret.)

Congress

- **Rosaline Benno**, Majority Chief Counsel for Legislation, Committee on Homeland Security
- **Grace Bloom**, Majority Committee Staff Member, Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change, and Manufacturing, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- **Lisa Canini**, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Accountability, Committee on Homeland Security
- **Cheryl Dickson**, Majority Committee Staff Member, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
- **Matt Dwyer**, Majority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
- **Brendan Gavin**, Minority Senior Policy Advisor/Coast Guard Fellow, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- **Fern Gibbons**, Minority Committee Staff Member, Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change, and Manufacturing, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- **Christine Godinez**, Majority Professional Staff Member, Committee on Homeland Security
- **Alex Marston**, Majority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security, Committee on Homeland Security
- **Maria Oparil**, Majority Professional Staff Member, Committee on Homeland Security
- **John Rayfield**, Minority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
- **Kate Shlepr**, Knauss Sea Grant Fellow, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
- **Nicole Teutschel**, Majority Senior Professional Staff Member, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- **Cheri-Ann Thompson**, Majority Committee Staff Member, Coast Guard Fellow, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Appendix D: The Admissions Process at Federal Service Academies

This appendix describes the admissions processes at the other federal service academies, including a discussion of consideration of diversity, efforts to attract a diverse pool of applicants, the congressional nomination process (CNP), and overall demographics at the other academies.

All five federal service academies have similar admissions processes, with some variation in review, timing, and the requirement for a nomination.

Baseline Eligibility

Requirements relate to:

- Age
- Citizenship, with limited spaces available for international students
- Physical and mental health and condition
- Good moral character
- No dependents

Application for Candidacy

The U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), U.S. Military Academy (USMA), and U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) require a pre-candidate questionnaire or application as a pre-screening tool. Only applicants passed to candidacy can continue the application process.

Application Requirements

Applicants must submit:

- Standardized test scores
- High school class rank
- Grade-point average
- Academic transcripts
- Teacher evaluations
- Activities record, including athletics, extracurriculars, volunteer, and work
- One or more essays

Nomination

USAFA, USMA, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), and USNA require applicants to be nominated. Most nominations are submitted by a U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator. Each office has its own procedure for reviewing candidates. A path to a nomination is available to individuals living in the District of Columbia, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The President, Vice President, the Service Secretary, and the DoD academies' Superintendents may also make nominations to DoD academies. USMMA does not accept Vice Presidential or military service-connected nominations.

Assessments

Candidates must satisfactorily complete one or more assessments related to health and fitness. Medical waivers are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Interviews

USAFA, USMA, and USNA require candidates to complete an interview with an admissions representative. Applicants to USAFA meet with an Admissions Liaison Officer. USNA interviewers are Blue and Gold Officers, and USMA uses Field Force Representatives. These may be active duty, retired, reserve, civilians, or others affiliated with the service.

Diversity as Part of the Admissions Process

Admissions directors at the other four service academies discussed the importance and difficulty of improving diversity at their schools. Each saw room for improvement, but they were uncertain how they could achieve it, given an increasingly difficult recruitment environment and limited resources.

Strategies focus on increasing the number of women and underrepresented minority applicants. These activities include making initial contact, building relationships, encouraging individuals to apply, and encouraging them to enroll once admitted. Admissions decisions do not weigh race, ethnicity, and sex. The breadth of application submission requirements allows the academies to consider a wide range of factors and a mix of strengths. This approach does not guarantee diversity but gives room for it.

One common strategy is building relationships with adults influential in their communities, such as officials in schools with large, diverse populations and high-achieving students. These influencers can help USMA recruiters understand the culture of the schools, giving them a better chance of being well-received. USAFA's ground game further targets "under-nominated districts," which are Congressional Districts with three or fewer qualified candidates over the preceding three-year period.

Another path to reaching influential adults is connecting with organizations of women and underrepresented minorities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. Their members may serve as role models or sources of information for students considering their options.

Bringing candidates and accepted students to campus can increase applications and improve yield (the percentage of admitted students who enroll). However, it is also possible that attendees have already decided on their top choice. USMA has a "minority visiting program" that demystifies the academy. Fully funded by donors, it brings candidates to campus for 72 hours. They stay in the barracks while their parents stay in a hotel.

Appendix E: Admissions Director Position Description

U.S. Coast Guard Academy Director of Admissions:⁸¹

Directs all recruitment, outreach, marketing, application review & selection of incoming U.S. Coast Guard Academy & Coast Guard Academy prep school (CGAS) classes in support of annual U.S. Coast Guard officer accession plan. Oversees coordination, management & logistics of U.S. Coast Guard Academy based recruiting programs including the Academy Introductory Mission (AIM); hosts over 7,700 visitors annually. Manages a \$2.5M budget, leads a 25-member staff & 1K+ nationwide volunteer workforce. Integral member of the USCGA Senior Leadership Team (SLT) & Admissions Committee (AC) President.

U.S. Coast Guard Academy Director of Admissions: The U.S. Coast Guard Academy (CGA) Director of Admissions, through coordination with Academy Minority Outreach Team (AMOT) Coordinators, will ensure AMOT members are incorporated into seasonal recruiting and outreach programs per the Annual USCGA Recruiting Plan. In addition, the Director of Admissions will coordinate and conduct a minimum of three meetings per year with AMOT Affinity Coordinators to facilitate information sharing and program improvements. The meetings will occur at USCGA or virtually, will allow participants to hear updated information leading to program growth and will provide an open forum to exchange ideas and lessons learned. Planned meetings can coincide with, but are not limited to, AIM sessions or CGAS Indoctrination Training (Summer), USCGA homecoming or parents weekend dates (Fall), and Eclipse Week (Spring).

The USCGA Admission Division has two basic functions annually. The first is to educate, recruit and influence a diverse collection of students from across the country, giving them the necessary tools and information to assist each in applying to USCGA. This ultimately leads to developing a robust applicant pool. The second role is to evaluate each applicant within the applicant pool in a holistic manner in order to make appropriate decisions for appointing the incoming class. The USCGA Admissions Director over sees each of these functions and should ensure AMOT volunteers play an integral part in each of these functions. AMOT volunteer assistance is a highly effective tool in the Admissions process and has been proven to assist in maximizing the number of well-informed underrepresented minority students in the applicant pool. As a general guideline, AMOT participation in the USCGA Admissions process is best summarized in five specific areas of emphasis:

Field Recruitment: A key element in recruiting is presence at every possible event. Presence is important to share information and highlight our Service and Academy through quality interactions. Influencing thought through example is best achieved in person. Admissions holds information sessions, recruiting Work Shops and Congressional Events. Conducting Virtual Outreach (increased effort based on COVID-19)

Independent Support & Info Gathering: USCGA Admissions plans for and coordinates attendance for a number of events nationwide throughout the recruiting season.

⁸¹ This position description has been lightly edited for clarity.

Understanding there are a number of events USCGA Admissions may not attend and may not know about, AMOT members have the ability to attend recruiting events on their own to assist students in understanding about USCGA and the Coast Guard.

On-Campus Program Support: The USCGA Admissions team makes every effort to influence students and their parents to visit the USCGA campus at some point in the admissions process so potential applicants can experience the campus for his or herself. A robust series of Campus Program events are provided each recruitment season to help facilitate this important part of the application process for students. AMOT volunteer support for these programs is consistently sought due to the tremendous impact AMOT officers can provide in the overall programs offered.

- The Academy Introduction Mission AIM (Cadre Mentorship/Student Interviews/USCGA & career highlight panel)
- Genesis Invitational – URM student-focused (CGA & career highlight panel/Parent engagement)
- Cadet-for-a-Day and Bears Day events (CGA & Career highlight panel/Parent engagement)

Application Support & Yield Efforts: Assisting students with addressing questions concerning applications is a big part of USCGA Admissions' focus on quality interactions with students. AMOT volunteers can greatly assist USCGA Admissions with getting answers and support to applicants early so students can finalize and submit applications on time for appointment consideration. AMOT members have been crucial in call campaigns leading to increases in submitted applications prior to published deadlines. AMOT members have also conducted interviews for Admissions lending additional insight to the student that would not otherwise be available. USCGA Admissions has sought AMOT assistance with follow-up calls to appointed applicants after appointments have been made with the hopes that these continued communications lead to an acceptance from the student prior to the published deadline. AMOT members have also been a key element of appointment presentation events, especially for students whom AMOT members has mentored throughout the process.

CGAS & Applicant Mentorship: As a large number of the cadet candidates enrolled in the Coast Guard Academy Scholars (CGAS) program are underrepresented minorities, AMOT volunteers have a unique opportunity to establish an important mentor relationship with CGAS students during this 10-month program. In some cases, mentor opportunities that started in the application process have the potential to develop into a long-term mentorship for students through CGAS and their time as Cadets at USCGA.



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