



## **The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy History and Mission**

### **A Rich History**

Although the U.S. government has supported maritime training since 1874, Congress ultimately realized there was a critical need to ensure high quality, standardized maritime training and passed the Merchant Marine Act in 1936. It wasn't until 1943, however, that the United States Merchant Marine Academy, located in Kings Point, New York, was formally established, as President Roosevelt said when he spoke at its opening, "to serve the Merchant Marine as West Point serves the Army and Annapolis the Navy."

The U.S. entrance into World War II skyrocketed the need for highly trained U.S. merchant marine officers to command and crew commercial ships diverted to serve our nation transporting troops, materiel and supplies. To meet demand, the Academy condensed its training program to 24, and then 18, months. By the end of the war, the Academy had graduated 6,634 officers for service as engineers and deck officers of the nation's merchant vessels.

In 1949, the Academy was authorized to issue the degree of Bachelor of Science by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

### **Today's Academy**

USMMA provides the nation with a reliable supply of highly-trained merchant marine officers dedicated to serving the Nation's national defense objectives. Like the other four federal academies (West Point, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard Academy), USMMA was created by statute. These five academies are the only undergraduate institutions of higher education that are part of the federal government.

Today's graduates incur a five-year federal service obligation and an eight-year armed forces reserve obligation. Graduates meet their five-year obligation by serving as an officer in the merchant marine or, upon approval, entering active military duty.

The U.S. flag merchant marine – manned by U.S. merchant mariners – is essential for securing the country's commerce in peacetime and delivering our warfighters, weapons, and military supplies to the fight in times of conflict. A number of these vessels participate in the Maritime Security Program.

USMMA is the only school in which 100 percent of graduates both earn a merchant marine license and incur an obligation to the U.S. government. USMMA graduates play a vital role in maintaining the maritime strength and security of the nation, making up more than 80% of the Strategic Sealift Officer Program force.

Without a force of fully trained merchant mariners with a mandated obligation to the U.S. Government to serve where and when needed, we would be forced to outsource carrying troops and materials to foreign mariners, whose national or personal interests may be at odds with U.S. policy.

## **Today's Midshipmen**

Students of the USMMA hail from diverse backgrounds and hail from almost every state in the nation. In addition to the rigorous academic and physical requirements for admission, applicants must be nominated by a U.S. Representative or Senator. All midshipmen must pass the U.S. government's requirements for a security clearance.

The USMMA trains a regiment of approximately 950 midshipmen each year. While the Academy still trains for the deck and engineering departments of U.S. flag merchant ships, course offerings have evolved to adapt to changes in the industry and advancing technology. Midshipmen now select from among five different courses of study: marine transportation; logistics and intermodal transportation; marine engineering; marine engineering systems; and marine engineering and shipyard management.

All midshipmen also complete course requirements in the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and Naval Science for a Bachelor of Science degree.

## **"The World is Our Campus"**

This motto is emblematic of Sea Year, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy's signature training program. Sea Year is fundamental to the world-class maritime education provided by USMMA and is mandated by Congress. It is an immersive program in which midshipmen are assigned to commercial vessels as officers in training to learn maritime skills in a real-world environment and is unique to USMMA – nothing comparable is offered at any other college or university, including the four other federal service academies.

Sea Year is split into two at-sea sessions – four months during the second academic year and eight months during the third academic year. Depending on their major, midshipmen earn 21 or 22 credits for completing the Sea Year core curriculum. By the end of their Sea Year, midshipmen will have trained on a diverse portfolio of vessels such as container ships, roll-on-roll-off ships, bulk grain and ore ships, and oil tankers.

In place since the Academy's founding in 1943, this partnership between the Academy and the commercial shipping companies that take midshipmen aboard their ships for training has been one of the most successful and enduring public-private partnerships in U.S. history.

---

## **The Maritime Security Program (MSP)**

Recognizing the need for merchant ships to be available to meet military sea lift needs in time of conflict, the U.S. government created what today is called the Maritime Security Program (MSP). There are approximately 60 U.S. flag privately-owned commercial merchant vessels participating in the program. Participants receive an operating offset stipend to ensure participation in international trade and availability to the U.S. government.

The MSP requires that both government owned or controlled and commercial fleets are crewed by U.S. citizen licensed merchant marine officers.

## **Strategic Sealift Officer Program (SSOP)**

SSOP supports national defense sealift requirements and capabilities, which are carried out by the Navy's Military Sealift Command. The program provides the Navy with officers that possess sealift, maritime operations, and logistics subject matter expertise, and further hold U.S. Coast Guard credentials as merchant marine officers.