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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

STATEMENT OF  
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SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON  
MILITARY PERSONNEL  
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Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy (USNA). The Naval Academy's mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. I am pleased to report to you today that USNA is succeeding in its mission, and in no small part due to the support of Congress. Notably, the most recent U.S. News & World Report College Rankings listed the Naval Academy as America's top public college, #4 for best undergraduate engineering programs, and #6 for best liberal arts college. In spite of the challenges of the COVID pandemic, our last four graduating classes have graduated on time, with over 4,000 newly commissioned Ensigns and Second Lieutenants joining our Navy and Marine Corps. Highlights from the Classes of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 include:

- An average overall graduation rate of 89%, well above the DoD requirement of 75%. Both male and female graduation rates exceeded 88%, and minority graduation rates exceeded 85%. I believe these statistics speak not only to the quality of USNA's incoming midshipmen, but also to the hard work of our faculty, staff and coaches, and the inclusive environment in which we work, educate and train.
- An average graduation rate for varsity athletes of 89%, a testament to USNA's commitment to the full development of student-athletes.
- An average of 76% of each Class' newly commissioned ensigns graduated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) degrees, exceeding the Chief of Naval Operations' requirement of 65%.

The Naval Academy assesses these graduation trends as positive, and attributes them to the effective developmental programs and processes that stem from the initial admissions process and continue through the 47-month education and leadership development experience.

### Admissions Process and Criteria

As a national institution, any U.S. citizen may apply for admission to the United States Naval Academy subject to USC Title 10 regulations and DOD/Navy policy. USNA uses an electronic application for admission on USNA's website. The application for admission opens each year in January and continues to stay open as a preliminary application until the end of December. Following initial application submission, students are notified electronically to continue working on their application using a student portal that includes the components of the application that must be completed for consideration for admission. These include transcripts, recommendations from school officials, extracurricular activities, a candidate fitness assessment, personal history/essay, Blue and Gold officer interview and college entrance examinations. USNA currently offers a test flexible policy, which allows students to have their application reviewed without the inclusion of standardized college entrance examinations (i.e., SAT or ACT). Additionally, students are required to complete a medical evaluation administered by the DoD Medical Examination Review Board and to apply for an official nomination. Completed applications are processed by the admissions staff and evaluated by the Admissions Board to determine overall qualification status and assign a score known as the Whole Person Multiple (WPM). The WPM is a tool that is used to compare candidates when nominations are received. In evaluating each candidate, the Admissions Board not only assesses the overall qualification for direct admission, but also makes an assessment for preparatory programs leading to

admission. These programs include the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) and the Naval Academy Foundation Program.

### *Whole Person Concept*

USNA uses a holistic process - a whole person assessment - in evaluating each candidate for admission. The holistic assessment balances objective factors included in each candidate's application, such as class rank/GPA, evaluations of school officials, athletic and non-athletic extra-curricular activities, athletic and non-athletic achievements, leadership, and candidate fitness assessment results, with subjective factors. Subjective factors include written evaluations of school officials, Blue and Gold Officers and other letters of recommendations as well as life experiences, interest in STEM disciplines, ability to overcome hardship/adversity, low-socioeconomic status, experiences living overseas or in another culture, first in family to attend college, first generation American, unique cultural experiences or fluency, English as a second language, exceptional athletic ability, those applying on their second or third attempt, and enlisted service members. Both objective and subjective factors are used by the Admissions Board in determining if the candidate is qualified for admission and assigning the WPM score to each file. At no time are points awarded for race, gender, or ethnicity. We are aware of the recent Supreme Court decision regarding collegiate admissions. While the decision explicitly does not address military academies, USNA is awaiting higher authority review of the decision and evaluating what implications, if any, it may have on our selection process.

### *Offers of Appointment*

Offers of appointment are determined by a committee of Office of Admissions staff members, and driven largely by the Congressional nomination process codified in USC Title 10, which includes both congressional and military service-connected nominations. Priority in

offering appointments by the committee is given to nominees of members of Congress, including the Title 10 requirement to select 150 congressional nominees by order of merit, and additional appointees. Offers to candidates with service-connected nominations are made after ensuring other Title 10 requirements are satisfied. Factors that also affect appointment decisions include the strength of the applicant's record, ensuring the Naval Academy is able to meet Navy and Marine Corps accession requirements at graduation, the number of vacancies offered by members of Congress, acceptance rates, medical disqualifications, and/or maximum size of the Brigade. USC Title 10 and DoD policy requirements for age, citizenship status, marital status and moral character are also factored into each decision.

### *Outreach*

Keeping in mind USNA's strategic plan to attract and admit a Brigade of Midshipmen who represent the diversity of the nation and whose background and lived experiences are valued and leveraged to best fulfill USNA's mission, USNA has boosted its outreach since 2006 to identify qualified candidates as early as middle school from every Congressional District in the country and to expose them to our campus and our midshipmen via a variety of on-campus, community, and virtual experiences.

On-campus experiences include Naval Academy Summer Seminar (NASS), which is conducted the first three weeks in June each year. Conducted by midshipmen, this program is designed to provide rising high school seniors from every congressional district a midshipman-like experience. NASS is complemented by Candidate Visit Weekends (CVWs), which are conducted during the year for both seniors and juniors, and allow students to room with and follow a midshipman's schedule. STEM Camps, like NASS, are midshipmen-led events on the campus conducted in June and focus on academic preparation for college and exposure to USNA

and STEM disciplines for rising 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders. During the year, short-duration STEM programs are conducted at USNA for middle and high school students. A significant investment has also been made to create awareness and support among school officials and community leaders from across the country through the Centers of Influence (COI) orientation program, which is conducted two to three times annually. The value of getting students, their parents, and influencers on-campus cannot be over emphasized. Students who have visited USNA complete applications at an average rate of nearly 70% versus 35% for those who do not. And, while there is no requirement or advantage to attending STEM Camp or NASS, nearly 45% of each incoming class includes students who attended one or both programs.

USNA's community-led programs include Operation Information (OPINFO) in which nearly 500 midshipmen travel to their hometowns to visit schools, appear at media events, and speak to community groups during Thanksgiving, winter, and spring leave periods. Midshipmen also participate in Admissions Forums held in local communities throughout the year and Congressional Academy Days held by members of Congress. The Admissions Staff also travels extensively throughout the year to conduct school visits, locally hosted STEM events, participate in Navy Week programs sponsored by the Recruiting Command and conduct candidate engagement.

The changing landscape in college admissions has also impacted USNA's outreach efforts with significant expansion into internet and virtual programs. USNA recently contracted a marketing consultant that specializes in internet and social media advertising, mass emailing, and use of texting technology. The Office of Admissions staff routinely conducts virtual counseling sessions and online webinars, uses cell phone technology to reach students, and employs a full-time digital media specialist who manages the Office's social media accounts.

These recent expansions into internet and virtual programs have been employed while ensuring student privacy data is protected.

Despite recent challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and drops in college enrollment nationally, USNA has experienced a nearly 37% increase in applications since 2006 and a 60% increase in the number of fully qualified candidates, which is the cohort considered for admission. At the same time, interest in attending USNA, as measured by the number of applications, has more than doubled for both female and racial/ethnic minority students. These increases are reflected in the actual admission of the incoming classes. Female representation within the incoming classes has risen from approximately 20% to over 31% this year, and representation of racial/ethnic minority students has increased from 23% to over 44%. Of equal importance in achieving geographical diversity within the Brigade, the number of Congressional Offices that do not submit nominations has decreased to an average of only 2-3 annually over the last several years. USNA has among the highest rates of offer acceptance in the country, incoming classes with exceptional academic/physical fitness credentials, record high graduation rates, and the most diverse Brigade of Midshipmen in Academy history.

### Academic Program

USNA's vision is to be the premier leadership and educational institution for developing naval officers who will preserve peace and prevail in conflict. Our philosophy of education stresses attention to individual students by highly qualified faculty and staff members who are strongly committed to teaching. Classes are small, with an average size of about 18-20 students. In science and engineering courses, the same professor who lectures in the classroom supervises

experiments in the lab. All courses at the Naval Academy are taught and graded by faculty members, not by graduate assistants.

Our faculty is an integrated group of nearly 600 officers and civilians in roughly equal numbers. Officers typically rotate to the Academy for two-to-three-year assignments, bringing fresh ideas and experiences from operational units of the Navy and Marine Corps. A cadre of about 50 officer faculty with doctorates adds another dimension to the teaching staff as Permanent Military Professors. The Academy's civilian faculty members give continuity to the educational program and create a higher education environment steeped in professional scholarship and effective teaching. All career civilian faculty members have doctoral degrees, and many of them are leading scholars in their fields. Working together, our military and civilian instructors form one of the strongest and most dedicated teaching faculties of any college or university in the United States.

#### *The Core Curriculum & Major Programs of Study*

The operational environment for our graduates is dynamic, occupying many domains and spatial and temporal scales. Today, perhaps even more so than in the past, a firm foundation in mathematics, physical sciences, engineering principles, and knowledge of the human condition is paramount. Without a firm knowledge foundation in these areas, naval officers will not be equipped to understand emerging technologies and apply them to enhance lethality against our adversaries or employ technologies to improve force protection. The educational core curriculum at the Naval Academy is designed to provide a robust foundation in these areas for every graduate and future officer.

At the undergraduate level, USNA's core curriculum focuses on principles providing the knowledge base from which to excel in more advanced and specific graduate, technical, or



professional studies. Operational and strategic case studies are used to provide operational insights and introduce strategic thinking, and to demonstrate to the midshipmen the application of the principles covered in the core curriculum to their future operations and training. Our mission is to prepare the midshipmen with the foundational skills and knowledge to be successful in any future learning. Graduates who are proficient in scientific inquiry, logical reasoning, and problem solving will provide an officer corps ready to lead in any warfare community of the Navy and Marine Corps.

Courses in a student's academic major also prepare them for advanced professional training and postgraduate education, which is expected of nearly all naval officers. While the majority of midshipmen freely choose their majors, the needs of the Naval Service take precedence. By order of the Navy itself, at least 65% of USNA graduates who are commissioned into the U.S. Navy must complete academic majors in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics disciplines.

USNA offers 26 majors, which are divided among three Schools. The School of Engineering and Weapons offers nine majors: Aerospace Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, General Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Ocean Engineering, and Robotics and Control Engineering. The School of Mathematics and Science offers ten majors: Chemistry, Computer Science, Cyber Operations, Data Science, General Science, Mathematics, Mathematics with Economics, Oceanography, Operations Research, and Physics. The School of Humanities and Social Sciences offers seven majors: Arabic, Chinese, English, Foreign Area Studies, History, Political Science, and Quantitative Economics. Majors are added or removed in response to the needs of the Navy. In the past decade, we have added majors in Cyber Operations, Nuclear

Engineering, Foreign Area Studies, and Data Science, and at the same time sunsetted the Information Technology major.

#### *Curricular Management Processes*

Providing guidance for and approving changes to the academic program of the Naval Academy is a primary responsibility of the Provost. Curriculum review and renewal comes from both internal expertise and via periodic external reviews. A regular Academic Review Program involving external reviewers for each department and its curriculum has existed at the Naval Academy since the early 1990s to provide an opportunity for internal self-evaluation and external reviewers evaluation, generating independent, non-binding feedback. Typically, each department or academic support area prepares a self-study document and hosts a panel of external reviewers (visiting committee) once within each five-year cycle. External experts typically include faculty from colleges and universities that emphasize undergraduate education, but have also included experts within the Department of the Navy. The external experts provide written recommendations and observations about the state of the Academy's program.

Additionally, USNA receives information about the needs of the Navy and the performance of our graduates from rotational officers and annual capstone critiques. Rotational officers arrive directly from fleet or program offices and typically teach at USNA for 3 years. With no more than three years removed from the same operational workplace into which our midshipmen will be assigned upon graduation, their regular turnover brings energy, enthusiasm, and recent experience to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and up to date.

Additionally, with the creation of an annual capstone day during which nearly every senior-year midshipman (individually or as a member of a team) displays a culminating project, we have

been able to involve senior Naval Officers as well as industry experts in critiques of student work and receive their broader suggestions for our programs.

On a continuous basis, departments teaching courses for academic credit are responsible for maintaining, developing, and assessing their courses so that the courses serve the Naval Academy Mission, remain relevant, and meet the needs of the Naval Service and/or serve to provide breadth or depth in specific disciplines. Changes to the curriculum are vetted by senior faculty to prevent unintended impacts elsewhere in the academic program and to ensure that any changes meet our institutional standards and demonstrate good stewardship of resources. For changes that have a significant effect on Naval Academy resources or the academic demands on midshipman time, the Provost will seek concurrence of the Superintendent. Significant changes include the establishment or disestablishment of departments, majors or minors.

### *The Role of Accreditation*

Accreditation is an important process of systematic self-evaluation against externally recognized standards. USNA is institutionally accredited through its regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and every program that is eligible for professional accreditation is also accredited at the program/degree level, including Chemistry through the American Chemical Society (ACS) and through ABET for all engineering degrees and computing programs.

Regional accreditation fosters public confidence in our programs; hence, it is required for institutions to apply for and maintain professional accreditations (ABET and ACS) and NCAA membership. A degree conferred from an accredited program is typically required for student entry into graduate programs. For regional accreditation, accredited status means that USNA regularly examines its programs and seeks continuous improvement within the framework of our

unique mission. Within the academic departments, there already exists a culture of continuous examination of the rigor and coherence and where possible improvement of the curriculum and of seeking ways to support all students admitted to the Naval Academy. MSCHE accreditation, however, provides a regular and valuable opportunity to examine our program across departments and verify that our processes and structures are aligned with our goals. While having a unique mission, singular purpose, and single employer of our graduates is generally viewed as a strength by the Naval Academy community, there are potential pitfalls. The Academy strives to ensure that the balance does not tip too far in terms of requiring a narrowly defined vocational/training experience rather than providing educational experiences focused on a strong technical core combined with a broad range of studies intended to ensure that midshipmen can apply their learning in both the standard operating and new, complex conditions that they will encounter during their Naval careers. Regional accreditation that respects and focuses on alignment of our educational activities and mission provides an additional level of accountability and helpful external feedback from the wider higher education community.

Program-level accreditation, through organizations like ABET and the ACS, signifies that those majors programs meet standards of educational breadth and depth for the discipline; that the facilities, faculty, and support structures provide a strong learning experience; and that graduates of the program can demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge.

### *Impacts on Thought and Learning*

The Naval Academy has established a set of ten graduate attributes. Two of these are “Learned” and “Innovative.” Graduates who are “learned” are broadly educated in academic and professional fields with focused disciplinary knowledge that enables the application of skills in complex and changing conditions through a lifetime of learning. Graduates who are

“innovative” are able to think critically to find and develop creative solutions for an increasingly complex world. Other learning outcomes associated with critical and strategic thinking vary by discipline; for example:

- English core: support an argument using evidence derived from analytical thinking.
- History core: analyze historical evidence as well as apply it to historical questions.
- Chemistry core: conducting experiments, analyzing and critically interpreting the results.
- Physics core: conceptualize fundamental key quantities and refine their intuitions about their physical world . . . construct basic connections between quantities to breakdown/illustrate the main idea.
- Leadership, Ethics, and Law core: integrate, analyze, and evaluate acquired knowledge and experience, and effectively use it in the decision-making process.
- Seamanship and Navigation core: generate a solution to a given warfare scenario within established doctrinal constraints.
- Engineering and Weapons core: apply knowledge of engineering fundamentals to understand and analyze Navy-relevant engineering systems.

As can be seen from these examples, a common thread throughout our curriculum is that we teach students *how* to think, not *what* to think. Midshipmen are not required to subscribe to any particular interpretative frameworks. The Academy expects graduates to become critical thinkers who are able to come to their own conclusions based on a wide variety of perspectives and narratives.

Students entering the Naval Academy do so with the recognition that the undergraduate educational program is among the best in the nation. The US Navy’s support and commitment to

the Naval Academy provides a strong foundation for the development of a culture of learning in the Navy in order to best serve the nation and the present and future needs of national defense.

### Conclusion

Established by Congress in 1845, the Naval Academy has developed into a four-year, total immersion program designed to instill professional, physical, and academic excellence required to develop leaders of character for careers in the Naval Service. Beginning with our admissions process and continuing through our many developmental opportunities, this program is designed to produce graduates nurtured in the basic core values and traditions of the Naval Service. The very nature of the Naval Academy affords every midshipman the opportunity to develop character and employ leadership skills in an environment designed to be a leadership laboratory.

The Naval Academy produces approximately one-third of the Navy's Unrestricted Line Officers every year – a critical mass. And as Admiral Larson, the only two-time Naval Academy Superintendent often said, “if we at the Naval Academy do our job right, we can be the custodian of the core values of the Navy. We can set a standard for professionalism, for honor, for integrity. If we do it right, our graduates go out to the fleet and lead by example.” I would offer that the Naval Academy is in fact, doing it right.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy. While I know many esteemed leaders in Congress often visit the Naval Academy to meet with their constituents, I want to be sure this Subcommittee understands they are invited to visit our campus at any time. We would be happy and honored to support you or

your staff for a tour and visit and/or lunch with midshipmen, as your schedules permit. I look forward to your questions.