

COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE

TO PY10 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS AND PANELS

1. Never has there been a more exciting or rewarding time to serve in the Coast Guard. The world is rapidly changing, and with it, we are confronting new challenges, threats and hazards, as well as significant opportunities. As we lead our Service in this rapidly evolving world, we cannot wait to be prompted by external events, concerns by our stakeholders or perceptions that dictate the terms of change to us. To succeed, we must be forward looking, adaptive, flexible and responsive to emerging concerns and trends. We must build a Coast Guard that continually senses change and adapts, but remains firmly linked to our long range strategy and core values. We must be able to discern even the slightest changes in demand signals for our services. Building a new Coast Guard is not limited to modernizing the organizational structure and our business processes. It means building leadership that will best position the Service for today and the future. It means continually assessing our skills and being engaged in lifelong learning regardless of rank or time in Service, specifically improving through advanced degrees, certifications, authorship, and participation in professional organizations. Optimal mission execution requires much more than monitoring operations. Intelligence, curiosity, personal preparedness and critical thinking are prerequisites to success. We need officers who excel in this rapidly changing climate – leaders who employ innovative methods to solve problems; who work with partners within the government and their communities to best serve the American people; who understand the concept of managed risk, and who create an environment for subordinates that embraces change, diversity of thinking, and Coast Guard core values.

2. Throughout our history the Coast Guard has embodied the highest sense of core values and public service. We've accomplished this by remaining focused on certain enduring principles that sustain the public's trust in our ability to execute our mission. In order to ensure superior service we need officers who can do the following:

- a. Continually reinforce core values: Character is a fundamental condition and represents a personal standard of excellence. Officers must consistently reflect the Coast Guard core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. Integrity and transparency are foremost among the traits that we expect in our leaders. Through personal example, conduct, and decisions – every day, on and off duty – officers must transparently model as well as instill the culture of our core values in their people.
- b. Think Innovatively and Act with Conviction: When confronted with crisis, our people must assess risk, develop a plan, and take swift and appropriate intervention. This bias for action requires officers who can think on their feet and be innovative in solving problems. We need leaders who promote teamwork, exercise on-scene initiative and flexibility, and accept and manage risk, while exercising appropriate restraint. Look for major accomplishments and discount minor errors. Officers should be out in front, encouraging innovation, and helping their people apply lessons learned for continuous systemic improvement. Active knowledge and demonstrated application of quality management principles are key indicators. We must focus on the effects we are trying to achieve rather than activities and levels of effort.
- c. Be Capable of Operating in a Dynamic Environment: We are first responders, ready for all hazards and all threats in the maritime domain, every hour and every day of the

year. Officers must be adaptable and flexible to meet these evolving challenges and should demonstrate those traits in all they do. They need to see opportunity in change, be able to readily adjust to changing circumstances, and lead with optimism and energy. Whether it is the peaceful and orderly transition from one administration to another, shifts in our external environment, or the modernization of our Service, change is a permanent feature of our Service and our world.

- d. Embrace Partnerships and Unity of Effort: We need officers who can operate and support operations in a linked and seamless fashion with partners, whether it is part of a major response to an event or in better serving the American public. We need officers who know how to form key and successful relationships and coordinate efforts with DHS components; DoD; other federal, state and local agencies; non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as we work together to provide for the safety and security of the U. S. maritime domain. We value the experience gained in joint and interagency assignments when those experiences are applied to improve the Coast Guard.
- e. Build the Future Workforce: To sustain superior mission performance and best position the Coast Guard for the future, we need an extremely well-trained, educated and diverse workforce. Diversity is not limited to the traditional areas of ethnicity, gender, color, and creed. Diversity is also variety of thought, experience, perspective, and culture. We need leaders who value differences, who are culturally attuned to the world in which we operate and the people in it, and who teach and mentor their people. Our officers must also be firmly committed to opportunity for all, and through their actions, promote diversity and foster cohesiveness and equal treatment in the workforce. Officers must recognize the Coast Guard is strengthened by recruiting and maintaining a diverse workforce. Senior leaders should demonstrate creative ways to cultivate ties with under represented populations through formalized outreach and affinity group participation.
- f. Carry out the Commandant's Strategic Intent: The Commandant's Intent represents my priorities for the Coast Guard. They are Mission Execution, People, Platforms and Support. We need to promote people who have the necessary technical expertise, management, and leadership skills to bring the Coast Guard strategy to life in our operations, support, training and workforce development, regardless of their specialty or the particular mission. Officers you select for promotion must be our best leaders and managers - capable of reacting and adapting to a dynamic operating environment and committed to igniting passion, motivation and innovation in our people.

3. FOR BOARDS CONSIDERING SELECTION TO O-3 AND O-4, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES: Officers primarily develop their specialty/technical/professional expertise in the O-1 to O-4 pay grades through assignments, on-the-job training, and formal education, or any combination of these. Developing expertise as junior officers sets the foundation for contributing to the Service at more senior levels. Officers must demonstrate leadership by taking ownership of safe and effective mission execution whether in operational or support roles. I expect reserve officers to demonstrate operational technical expertise at such units as sectors and port security units. Junior reserve officers may be largely geographically stable but should show a solid progression in responsibility and in the operational aspects of the Coast Guard.

4. FOR BOARDS CONSIDERING SELECTION TO O-5 AND O-6, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES:

In addition to mastery of the technical or specialized aspects of their assignments, officers in the O-5 and O-6 grades must demonstrate the leadership, management, and professional skills necessary to obtain optimal performance from people, manage risks, be an expert in their field, reach out to diverse segments of the workforce and be best qualified to serve at the next grade. To meet current and emerging Service demands, the Coast Guard is requiring more officers to remain within their respective specialty areas. As officers move into senior ranks, they must have an understanding of the major issues facing the Coast Guard as a whole in order to best contribute, through their particular expertise, to the overall needs of the Service. This understanding of macro Service issues can be acquired in many ways even within specialty, through assignment diversity (different type of unit/different type of billet/different geographic location), participation in studies and task forces, and special assignments.

I expect senior reserve officers will be experts in their individual mobilization specialty and more focused on the mobilization potential of those reservists in their span of control.

Joint/interagency expertise at this level is demonstrated not only in assignments but aggressive pursuit of educational opportunities such as the Reserve War and Staff Colleges. Senior officers should show diversity in assignments, less geographic constraints and be equally comfortable in the Coast Guard operational environment as well as the DoD and interagency community.

Because of the dramatically increased scope of authority and responsibility for O-5 and O-6 positions, officers you select to serve in these grades must be able to make the leap from hands on management of the day-to-day details to empowering their people to perform those functions, while they take a strategic view, including a broad understanding of the joint, interagency, inter-governmental, not for profit and private sectors. The qualities we seek in flag officers should be apparent in our best-qualified O-6s.

5. FOR O-6 CONTINUATION AND SELECTION TO FLAG RANK: Flag officers and our senior captains greatly influence the success of the Coast Guard. They serve as the Commandant's senior field representatives, Coast Guard program directors, and in positions of significant responsibility in other agencies and military services. Flag officers are members of the Commandant's senior leadership team and must contribute substantially to the advancement of Service goals. They increasingly represent not only the Coast Guard but the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and federal government at all levels of government and internationally. They represent the succession of leadership of our Service.

- a. Vision: Since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, we have witnessed the continual restructuring and adaptation of governmental organizations and relationships in response to a changing threat environment. Examples include the post-Katrina restructuring of DHS, the transition of DoD forces to address irregular warfare, emergence of a cyber security force requirement, and changes in the National Security organization made by the new Administration. Our capabilities, competencies, organizational structure and processes must change accordingly, and we need flag officers who articulate a vision, embrace change, work together and act boldly and decisively to execute shared objectives that have been determined to best serve the national interest.

- b. Leadership: The future of the Coast Guard requires enlightened and empowering leaders in our flag officer and senior executive corps. They inspire our workforce and drive the direction of the Service and must be stellar examples of all that we represent. They must be our very best leaders who have demonstrated the commitment to achieving the Coast Guard's established goals and to empowering and nurturing the next generation of Coast Guard leaders. They should be leaders who are collaborative, transparent, and decisive.
- c. Partnering: Selectees must have the ability to excel at forming tactical, operational and strategic partnerships within the Coast Guard and in the joint and interagency arenas, as well as with state and local government, the private and not for profit sectors, and the international community. When needed, these skills must be equal to the task of dealing with hesitant or uncooperative players. Similarly, selectees must recognize when internal program-centric or parochial behavior defeats stewardship responsibilities and overcome them by forging unified organizational solutions.
- d. Public Presence: Selectees must have the knowledge, presence, confidence, and bearing to represent the federal government in situations of national interest. They must demonstrate political savvy and a level of professionalism reflective of both the excellence of the Coast Guard and an ability to impact national-level policy processes. Flag officers must be articulate and persuasive advocates for the Coast Guard. Continuing intellectual development and external awareness of national and international political, economic, and social issues and trends over the course of a career enable this capability. Their performance should reflect these qualities.
- e. Knowledge and Information Management: Intellectual preparedness is the fuel for vision. Selectees must have a broad and in-depth intellectual capacity to learn, retain, and apply knowledge. They must have keen analytical skills and the ability to readily assimilate elements of information regarding unfamiliar subjects. They must be able to make judgments on the quality of information provided through diverse mediums, and make good decisions in areas not within their area of expertise. This includes the demonstrated capability to understand, engage and employ emerging human networks linked by internet technologies.
- f. Organizational Context: Selectees must have a demonstrated political acumen and an understanding of how the Coast Guard fits into the broader structure of the Department, Executive Branch, federal government, nation, and international community. Selectees must be able to cultivate the internal and external relationships that affect the Coast Guard and the Department, approaching each situation with a clear perception of external reality, and recognizing the potential impact of Coast Guard courses of action.

6. Officer selection boards and panels are, in fact, creating the future of our Service. Our people, above all else, are the Coast Guard's strength. Members of boards and panels are entrusted with the duty to ensure our people continue to be our source of inspiration and excellence. The Coast Guard and the Nation are depending on it.