COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE
TO PY16 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS AND PANELS

1. BACKGROUND

Our Coast Guard is more adaptable, more effective and more relevant than ever before. Expanding maritime activity across the globe and increasingly unpredictable and consequential disasters are driving up mission demand while a continuing fiscal pressure creates an even more competitive resource environment. The Coast Guard must maintain an officer corps with the leadership, moral courage and intellectual capital to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the future while preserving the best elements of our proud heritage as America's Coast Guard.

Selection boards (commonly referred to as promotion boards) as well as assignment and selection panels will continue to evaluate members based on their records, and will select the strongest performers and leaders with the potential for continued growth and sustained excellence.

Assignment and Selection Panels should apply the same rigor and standards as promotion boards in identifying the best qualified candidates for command assignments, educational opportunities, and other programs, though they may consider specialty skills and career paths in the context of the specific panel's purpose as part of broader selection criteria.

<u>Service to our Nation</u>:

Promote officers who demonstrate a dedication to the mission, including a bias for action and a track record of delivering results. This extends beyond just operational performance, but also in the creation and execution of policies and ideas. Our officers must be competent from the strategic to the tactical levels so they can best serve our people and the missions we conduct. The Coast Guard needs officers who take decisive action, provide proper guidance, and empower their subordinates. At times, this calls for measured risk taking, and officers must demonstrate ability to carefully understand and accept warranted operational and professional risk.

The Coast Guard carries out its missions in a joint and interagency environment. A clear understanding of our role within government and our relationship with external stakeholders is vital to our long-term success. Even our most junior officers are called upon to lead or participate in teams that cross unit and agency lines. We must encourage growth opportunities and promote officers who demonstrate the ability to lead teams successfully and develop partnerships which advance Coast Guard objectives and better serve the Nation.

The Coast Guard must have an officer corps that continuously learns and understands that new skills and perspectives are required to stay ahead of our dynamic operating environment. We must select officers for promotion who demonstrate the ability to evolve, learn, and build a culture that can quickly adapt to our operating environment, evolving workforce, and complex interagency and inter-governmental network.

Duty to People

We will, on and off duty, embody our Core Values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. Therefore, we must promote selfless leaders who put the mission and their people ahead of themselves by cultivating a positive command climate and who promote the professional development and well-being of their people. This includes selecting officers who are positive role models and who demonstrate loyalty to the Service and the strength of character to hold themselves and others accountable for lapses in behavior.

I have set ambitious goals for our Service, such as eliminating sexual assault, which will require a change in our culture. Our officers must value diversity of talent, abilities and viewpoints – as well as ethnicity, gender, culture and creed. Successfully advancing this cultural change is very difficult work and calls for the most adept leaders who dedicate themselves to influencing their people in a positive manner. I value officers who have taken on a leadership role in these areas, and expect board and panel members to do the same.

Our Coast Guard team is our key to success. The Coast Guard is able to provide valuable services to the American public because of its uniquely qualified and experienced active duty, reserve, auxiliary and civilian members. We must promote officers who mentor others and proactively create opportunities for subordinates to set and achieve professional goals.

Commitment to Excellence

Excellence is a standard for our Service. It is rooted in proficiently conducting and supporting our missions. We must promote officers who pursue mastery of their craft and are dedicated to continuous learning that will support superior operational and strategic leadership. The Coast Guard needs officers who not only pursue personal proficiency, but transform their experience into effective leadership and create proficient teams that sustain mission excellence.

Officers must always lead and aspire to command, command cadre, senior staff positions and positions of the highest responsibility within their specialty and across the Service. We must also be mindful that our organization vests huge responsibility in positions that are not titled as "Commanding Officer." These positions require a high degree of professional skill, certification, licensing and proficiency requirements, and include acquisition professionals, department heads, product line managers, supervisors, division chiefs, staff judge advocates and equivalent billets.

Board and panel members should also be cognizant of the Coast Guard's efforts to build more proficient officers and maximize the Service's return on investment in training and PCS costs by requiring members to complete tours and encouraging an appropriate degree of geographic stability.

The Coast Guard needs officers who employ resources where they will provide the greatest possible impact and think of new, innovative ways of conducting our missions and/or providing services. We must select candidates who are ethical stewards of the resources they are entrusted with, and enforce the highest levels of professional accountability in every endeavor. We must also promote officers who are committed to creating and sustaining the most efficient and

effective organization possible. This will call for officers who apply a combination of innovation and common sense to leverage new technologies, capabilities, partnerships, and intelligence to maximize the return on America's investment in its Coast Guard.

2. APPOINTMENT AND SELECTION OF CHIEF WARRANT OFFICERS, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES:

Appoint or promote candidates who are masters of their occupational specialty, and have displayed superb leadership and management skills. Those selected for promotion should display continued enthusiasm for pursuing new experiences and challenges in the Service. Select candidates who adhered to our Core Values throughout their careers, and demonstrated unwavering support for fostering positive command climates.

Reserve CWOs and those seeking reserve warrant appointments are expected to demonstrate the same progression in responsibility and technical experience as their active duty counterparts.

3. SELECTION TO O-3 and O-4, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES:

Promote action oriented junior officers who possess core professional knowledge, deep commitment to our Core Values and significant leadership potential.

Officers in this grade should leverage every opportunity to acquire and employ competencies within their specialty through operational experience and formal training. In cases where officers may have limited opportunity for operational experience, these officers nevertheless must seek responsibilities that support operations or provide exposure to operations. Attaining key qualifications or certifications within prescribed windows is the expectation across all specialties, and will position the officer optimally for continued professional growth and promotion.

Advanced education and special assignments, e.g., White House, aide, congressional affairs, etc., complement experience gained through operational assignments. These challenging opportunities reflects intellectual energy, broad vision and adaptability which the Coast Guard values. However, it must be appropriately integrated into career timelines based on the particular specialty profile. The Service investment in officers selected for key professional training and education programs is significant, and reflects the trust and confidence in their potential to contribute in future demanding positions.

Coast Guard missions are conducted in a fast-paced and often unforgiving environment. Junior Officers will make mistakes as part of the learning process. Evaluate errors against Service standards and impacts. Consider subsequent performance and conduct that positively reflect lessons learned and demonstrate the officer's potential to serve in the next higher grade.

Junior reserve officers are expected to demonstrate the same progression in responsibility and technical experience as their active duty counterparts.

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

Officers competing for selection to O-5 or O-6 are generally already top performers within their specialty. Officers considered for promotion to O-5 must demonstrate subject matter expertise within their primary specialty. Additionally, senior officers must demonstrate the leadership skills to create and guide diverse teams as they solve complex or ambiguous problems. Promote officers with a strong track record of success in challenging assignments; delivering excellent results in mission execution or mission support and who are ready to assume significant leadership positions, represent our Service at a senior level and formulate the strategic foundations for the future.

As highly visible leaders, I expect every senior officer to be a role model of ethical behavior and inclusive leadership. Select officers who build positive, inclusive command and organizational climates that foster the professional development and well-being of their personnel.

As the Service adapts to new mission demands in a potentially resource constrained environment, senior officers will be called upon to find new ways to deliver on our commitment to the Nation. Becoming a more efficient and effective Service may call for changes in the way we employ our assets, manage our people and interact with our partners. Promote officers who demonstrate the ability to weigh and manage operational, political, legal, and fiscal risk across the spectrum of Coast Guard activities. They must also create work environments where innovation, creativity and collaboration thrive.

As the Coast Guard navigates the challenges ahead, it must be guided by officers with the ability to recognize and understand the impact of emerging forces, as well as work cohesively with our joint, interagency and other stakeholders to accomplish our missions. Promote candidates who have pursued advanced education and taken on assignments that provide experience working across the joint or interagency community or with the public and private sectors.

To meet current and emerging Service demands, the Coast Guard has required some officers to concentrate their assignments within their respective specialty areas. Officers can acquire vital broadening experience through participation in studies, task forces or special assignments which provide a comprehensive view of major issues for our Service.

The Coast Guard has undergone significant changes in mission and organization over the past decade. Officers who have a sustained record of exceptional performance while adapting to these changes should be valued for the diversity of experience they bring to the senior officer corps.

Senior reserve officers must be experts in their mobilization specialty and positively influence reservists to grow their skills and readiness. They should pursue joint service or interagency expertise through assignment progression and educational opportunities such as the Reserve War and Staff Colleges. Senior reserve officers must be prepared to craft solutions to sustain a vibrant and ready workforce.

5. O-6 CONTINUATION AND SELECTION TO FLAG RANK

The Flag corps must be comprised of the very best leaders with the ability to set a strategic vision and guide our organization during demanding and dynamic times. Select those few officers that display innovation, entrepreneurship and independence of thought. These traits are indicative of officers who can solve complex problems and move our organization forward.

The strongest candidates for flag selection will have distinguished careers that include successful command or equivalent assignments that demand similar trust, responsibility and decision making and provide a clear understanding of the Coast Guard's relevance to the Nation and the maritime community. They have led the Service through complex challenges that require a robust blend of political savvy, exceptional communications skills, and agile execution. They will also have a firm grasp of Service-wide challenges which require strong strategic leadership.

Flag nominees are highly respected by their peers, those they lead and the appropriate external stakeholders. They possess unquestionable character that allows them to lead by example. They successfully combine humility with confidence; allowing them to embody the concept of servant leadership. They are compassionate and understanding of the potential flaws of our members, but committed to sustaining our proud lineage by holding all accountable to the highest standards of conduct, performance and professionalism.

The Coast Guard needs Flag officers who take the long-term view and act as catalyst for constructive change. Promote candidates who are are willing to make difficult decisions to ensure the Coast Guard's long-term success, and can balance those choices with near term imperatives. Select officers who are truly dedicated to shaping a workforce that is ready to meet emerging challenge and nurturing the next generation of Coast Guard leadership.

Our Flag corps serves as the Commandant's senior field commanders, representatives and liaisons. Flag nominees must have political acumen and an understanding of how the Coast Guard fits into the broader structure of the Department of Homeland Security and the federal government. They must have the ability to create and strengthen partnerships in the joint and interagency arenas, as well as with state/local governments, the private sector and the international community.

O-6s selected for continuation or retention should possess the attributes and qualities needed in our flag officers. These officers should be among those with the strongest viability for future flag consideration. They must have a sustained record of exceptional performance and the drive to continue to serve with distinction. They must possess the skill, character and integrity to support our senior leaders and to guide the future generation of Coast Guard men and women.

6. CONCLUSION

The Coast Guard's greatest strength has always been its people. You are entrusted with shaping the officer corps that will make up our Service leadership for decades to come. Thank you for your dedication and thoughtful work as you carry out your duties as members of these boards and panels.

Paul F. Zukunft
Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant