



All Hands Messages

Leadership and Diversity Initiatives

To the Men and Women of the Coast Guard:

I was pleased this week to address the Annual National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) in Portsmouth, Virginia. From their website, “The National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) actively supports the Sea Services in recruiting, retaining, and developing the careers of minority officers. The NNOA provides professional development and mentoring for its members. The NNOA continues to establish and maintain a positive image of the Sea Services in minority communities and educational institutions.”

This year’s conference was particularly meaningful because it coincided with the 60th Anniversary of Executive Order 9981 which was signed by President Truman on 26 July 1948. Executive Order 9981 ended segregation in the armed forces and required that “there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.” Since then, there has been great progress made in the Armed Forces since the end of World War II to remove barriers and ensure equality among all of those who serve our country in uniform.

That said challenges still remain to ensure our Coast Guard is an inclusive service that values and promotes diversity. Diversity is a concept that extends far beyond the traditional legal notions of equal opportunity and civil rights. Diversity is really the broad representation of culture, religion, values, ethnicity, gender, education, life experience, professional qualification, and the other many things that make us unique as individuals. As I noted in my remarks at NNOA inclusion of diverse individuals and viewpoints produces better decisions and action in organizations. I really see diversity as a readiness issue that all of our senior leaders and unit commanding officers must consider as one of the keys to effective mission execution.

To that end, I believe we must redouble our commitment to creating a more diverse workforce in the Coast Guard. For the last several months I have been working with my diversity advisors, listening to feedback from the Diversity Advisory Council, and talking to our units in the field. Together with the Vice Commandant, VADM Vivien Crea, and with the support of senior leaders, we intend to implement a series of initiatives aimed at improving our diversity at accession points and increasing retention through improved career development and management.

I outlined the initial steps we intend to take in my remarks at the NNOA Conference. The full presentation can be accessed at the following site: [cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2_itemId=332220].

- We will enhance senior leader participation with Minority Serving Institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, those institutions affiliated with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Council Institutions.
- We will increase attendance by senior leaders and commanding officers at national conferences of affinity groups such as NNOA, the Association of Naval Services Officers, Coast Guard Women’s Leadership Association, and Blacks in Government.
- I have directed that Officer Evaluation Reports for junior officers be signed by the reported on officer before the report is forwarded from the command to establish parity with our enlisted evaluation system.
- We will expand the use of Individual Development Plans (IDP) to all O-4s and E-6s and below.
- We will focus our College Student Pre-commissioning Initiative (CSPI) toward institutions with more diverse student populations.
- Finally, we will begin a pilot program to promote Coast Guard career opportunities for diverse candidates in the Baltimore, Md area.

Instituting these changes will take time, but we are committed to moving forward “at best speed.” Our Assistant Commandant for Human Resources will provide updates on these items and future endeavors through a series of messages. Some initiatives, such as the IDP program which have the potential to increase workload will be piloted first to ensure we get it right.

There are more changes coming, but as we refine our strategy and deploy it, I want to make sure you have a voice. I want to hear your ideas on how we can develop a diverse workforce to improve mission effectiveness. I posted an entry on the Department of Homeland Security’s Leadership Journal [<http://www.dhs.gov/journal/leadership/>] so please provide comments so others can see and build on your ideas. You can also respond to this All Hands email if you desire to keep your feedback private. I previously asked all Coast Guard personnel to direct our Guardian Ethos towards each other, those who serve beside us. This initiative is in keeping with that Ethos and I ask for your active involvement.

Admiral Thad Allen
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard

