COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE
TO PY14 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS AND PANELS

Ref: (a) U.S. Coast Guard Publication 1, Appendix C
(b) The Armed Forces Officer, National Defense University Press, 2007 Ed.
(c) U.S. Coast Guard Publication 3-0
(d) U.S. Coast Guard Commandant's Direction 2011
(e) Shipmates 23: "Proficiency – The Essence of Discipline"

As Coast Guardsmen, we are honored and privileged to perform meaningful work, essential to the long term safety and security of our country. To meet the demands of our unique capabilities, we must cultivate, promote, and assign officers who possess the proficiency in leadership, proficiency in craft and disciplined initiative necessary to achieve mission success in the challenging maritime environment. I expect officers will demonstrate a commitment to the culture and Core Values of the Coast Guard, and the traditions of Officers of the Armed Forces of the United States. References (a) through (e) provide in-depth background and guidance to meet this expectation.

The Coast Guard renews leadership through the selection of our best qualified officers for service in the next higher grade. Members of selection boards and panels must be mindful of the sacred trust they bear for not only the future of our Service, but also the future of the individual officers under consideration.

Servant Leadership

"Leadership extends beyond authority, responsibility and accountability. Leaders place the duty to serve those they lead, and the Coast Guard, before their own well-being. Humility. They stand up for their people, take risks when prudence dictates, and do the right thing no matter the cost. Courage. They live the core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty—and demand that others meet the same high standards."

- *Shipmates 23: "Proficiency: The Essence of Discipline"*

Responsibility, authority, and accountability

Promotions to the next higher grade mandate commensurate increases in responsibilities and authorities. Officers should aspire to command, command cadre, senior staff positions, positions of the highest responsibility within their specialty, or other assignments that provide them with successively greater levels of responsibility, authority, and accountability.

Be particularly vigilant for those who serve and succeed in positions accompanied by additional risk and rigorous accountability.

Select officers who believe in "service" before "self": leaders who cultivate positive command climates and work environments. They must also display the strength of character to hold subordinates accountable for lapses in performance and/or behavior.

Promote leaders who forge, maintain, and strengthen beneficial internal and external partnerships.

Choose responsible stewards of our public resources, who maintain and require the highest levels of professional ethics.

Honoring our Profession

Promote leaders who focus on skillfully and safely performing our core roles and missions, while also prioritizing demands to ensure mission balance and a high degree of readiness.

Officers should select a specialty, and a sub-specialty, continually working to gain experience, knowledge, and proficiency in these areas. More importantly, officers must demonstrate the ability to transform their specialty knowledge and experience into effective leadership.

Recognize officers who commit to continual learning and self improvement through qualifications, certifications, or other professional milestones, and the pursuit of advanced education. Authorship or participation in professional organizations is also an important part of lifetime learning.

All officers selected should demonstrate selflessness, humility, professionalism, and enthusiasm; live by our Core Values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty; seek responsibility, exercise authorities judiciously, and ensure accountability.

Diversity is vital to mission relevance, readiness, and execution. Diversity of talent, ability, ideas, and viewpoints—as well as ethnicity, gender, culture, color, and creed are critical in a Service that represents our employers: the American people. The Coast Guard also needs active participants in affinity groups and professional organizations, using knowledge gained there for mentoring and individual development. This guidance does not require or permit the preferential treatment of any officer or group of officers based on race, religion, color, gender or national origin.

FOR BOARDS CONSIDERING SELECTION, PROMOTION, AND CONTINUATION OF CHIEF WARRANT OFFICERS

CWOs are mature individuals with appropriate education and specialty experience who have shown through demonstrated initiative and past performance they have the potential to assume positions of greater responsibility requiring broader conceptual, management and leadership skills. While administrative and technical specialty expertise is required in many assignments, CWOs must be capable of performing in a wide variety of

assignments that require strong leadership skills. Select for appointment and promotion those individuals who demonstrate leadership and technical prowess in their current roles and can rapidly adapt to the culture of the officer corps.

FOR BOARDS CONSIDERING SELECTION TO O-2 THROUGH O-4, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES:

Promote officers to O-2, O-3, and O-4 who are consistently demonstrating developed core competencies and growing leadership qualities. For selection to O-2 and O-3, discount documented minor errors; place greater emphasis on subsequent performance that reflects lessons learned and demonstrates the officer's potential to serve in the next higher grade.

Junior officers should be rated and promoted based on professional knowledge, skills, and experience in their chosen specialty. Their primary Service value lies in their technical expertise at the tactical level, growing leadership abilities, professional competency, and experience. They should progressively demonstrate technical competence and proficiency through on-the-job training, formally recognized training or education, and/or achievement of professional milestones—for example, completion of naval flight training and follow-on upgrade training to aircraft commander, requisite marine inspector training and qualification, or qualification and preparation to become a commanding officer of a cutter. These may preclude the officer from pursuing additional advanced education opportunities; obtaining technical qualification or certification should be considered commensurate with the level of effort and importance of earning a Master's degree.

Pursuing/obtaining postgraduate degrees is not an acceptable substitute for gaining experience and proficiency in one's specialties at this stage of a career. Advanced education should augment one's operational capabilities, not supplant them.

As officers progress, they should shift their development focus from the tactical/technical skills to leadership skills. Although it is common to solve problems based solely on one's own experience, we need officers willing to work outside their comfort zone and continually learn from those around them.

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

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

Promote officers to O-5 and O-6 who demonstrate excellence in the enduring core competencies and leadership qualities set forth in my above guidance and who are the best in grade.

They should also possess strong representational, oral and written communications skills.

O-5s should demonstrate evidence of mastery in their specialty and the analytical ability to solve complex challenges.

O-6s should have achieved mastery of their specialty and demonstrate an overarching understanding of our Service. These officers shall exhibit a commitment to the development and well-being of their subordinates, which may include a record of mentoring others: reaching out into their field as well as diverse segments of our community.

O-5 and O-6 candidates must clearly demonstrate both a high level of technical competence and proven leadership abilities in demanding assignments. Evaluate how candidates exercise responsibility and authority and their success leading teams in accomplishing tasks. Look for innovation, vision and adaptability, as well as character and enthusiasm. Choose those who maintain and teach good stewardship of our public resources. Promote leaders who can complete major projects, beyond merely proposing ideas or methodologies. Select leaders whose contributions, regardless of execution or support role, impact operations, achieve efficiencies, or otherwise advance safe and effective mission accomplishment.

The Coast Guard requires that more officers remain within their respective specialty areas. Developing and maintaining these specialized skills (e.g., law, finance, acquisition) requires current experience, certifications and continuous engagement in competencies.

O-5s and O-6s must also understand the major issues facing the Coast Guard; this is attained through assignment diversity (i.e., different types of unit, billets, and geographic locations), participation in studies and task forces, and special assignments.

Value those who understand joint, interagency, inter-governmental, not-for-profit, private and international sectors.

Senior reserve officers must be experts in their individual mobilization specialty and demonstrate focus on the mobilization potential of those reservists in their span of control. They should possess joint/interagency expertise through assignments and aggressive pursuit of educational opportunities such as the Reserve War and Staff Colleges. Senior reserve officers should show both assignment and geographic diversity, and be equally comfortable in the Coast Guard operational environment and the DoD and interagency community.

FOR O-6 CONTINUATION AND SELECTION TO FLAG RANK

Flag officers and Senior O-6s provide overarching vision and leadership for our Service. They are the representatives of our Service to the public, Congress, other armed services, cabinet-level agencies and senior government officials, international bodies and foreign

governments, and industry. They are ultimately responsible and accountable for the good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us by the American people.

Give particular consideration to officers who take on the most difficult and challenging high-visibility assignments and leadership positions. These include assignments in mission execution (particularly those commanding operational units), mission support, or details outside of the Coast Guard. Required characteristics include: decisive, balanced and strategic decision making; poise, knowledge, and presence that advance the reputation and excellence of our Service; political understanding and Service advocacy to impact national-level policy making; sound stewardship of public resources; and finally, humility…an essential characteristic of the best leaders.

O-6s selected for continuation should be our best-qualified and must manifest the qualities needed in flag officers.

We need our flag officers to be the very best in grade, with records and reputations that distinguish them as the brightest and most capable to lead our Service into the future. Selection to flag also requires embracing and advancing the enduring core competencies and leadership qualities. Subordinates, peers and seniors should all seek to serve with them. Flag officers must have a passion for our Service, clear conviction of purpose, and demonstrate collegiality.

R. J. Papp, Jr.
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Commandant