



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

October 25, 2016

The Honorable Peter King
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman King:

I am providing answers to the specific questions you posed regarding the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA or the Academy), as I indicated I would in my letter of September 28.

As you note in your letter, Sea Year is a unique training opportunity for the men and women of the Academy. While we acknowledge the educational strength of this productive experience, the need to ensure that all Midshipmen are safe and are treated with respect—on campus and at Sea Year—is of the utmost importance to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Effective learning can only take place when men and women feel secure in a supportive environment.

To date, the Academy's leadership has focused on prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment, responding appropriately to incidents, and creating a leadership development program to address campus climate issues. As the Department began to assess steps for reinstating Sea Year on commercial vessels, however, it became evident that inappropriate behaviors at sea may be inextricably linked to offensive conduct and related behavior, such as bullying, hazing, coercion, and retaliation, on campus. We understand that we cannot address one environment without addressing the other; this entire set of behaviors must be addressed.

The Department has chosen to take a proactive approach to institutionalizing change within the culture at the Academy and its connection with Sea Year. Over the next several months, independent experts experienced in assessing institutional and organizational culture will examine all aspects of USMMA culture, both on campus and at sea. As these experts attempt to identify root causes and offer possible short-term and long-term corrective actions to address these issues, resumption of Sea Year on commercial vessels will be delayed.

The Department will make every effort to ensure that all Midshipmen receive the number of sea days necessary to take the examination for their Merchant Marine Credential and, furthermore, that they receive their training in a safe environment. We will keep you apprised as we move forward to stand up the commercial Sea Year training. The Department will, however, continue assigning Midshipmen to Federal vessels, including training ships on loan to the State Maritime Academies, so they can obtain their required sea days.

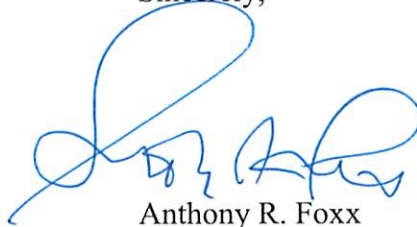
Page 2

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We appreciate your interest in these issues and look forward to working with you as we strengthen and improve the experience of our Midshipmen on campus and during Sea Year.

The enclosed document provides answers to your questions regarding the Sea Year stand down. Thank you for your continued support of the Academy. I have sent a similar response to each cosigner of your letter. If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anthony R. Foxx", with a large, stylized initial "A" that loops back.

Anthony R. Foxx

Enclosure