



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

May 20, 2016

Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski
President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Dr. Sibolski:

I am writing to convey my deep commitment, along with that of my staff at the Department and the Maritime Administration (MARAD), to ensuring the quality of maritime education and student life at the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). We have begun to make significant progress in changing the culture and improving the governance and financial accountability of the institution.

One of my priorities as Secretary is to put a stop to the incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment that are disrupting the academic and student environment. The USMMA has continued its systemic and sustained efforts to address these issues, and we will support them in every way possible in developing all further necessary steps to ensure that such behavior does not continue. We know that change begins at the top, and I am confident that the leadership of the Academy will make certain that every level of management is part of the solution.

In addition, our Departmental Office of Civil Rights will ensure that USMMA possesses the information and tools necessary to create and maintain an environment, both on campus and aboard ship, that is free of harassment and assault. This office is already communicating with the Academy concerning these issues and this communication will continue on a regular basis. Filling the Director of Civil Rights position at the Academy will significantly add to the enforcement and oversight capabilities on site and will complement the responsibilities of the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator. We will also provide technical assistance with comprehensive training for all employees, anti-harassment policy development and implementation, effective communications tools, and other measures designed to promote accountability throughout the Academy. **In June, we have scheduled high level-meetings with industry leaders to collaborate on improving conditions during the Sea Year and after graduation.** We will advise the Academy on additional measures to support students and to foster a climate of mutual respect.

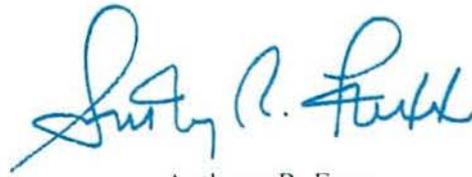
We also recognize that fiscal independence and responsible governance are critical to the long-term health of the institution. As you know, we must rely on Congress to rescind the restrictive

legislation over the USMMA's finances, and I am pleased to announce that the Senate Appropriations Committee has voted to remove the current financial authority restrictions in its Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 bill currently under consideration. I will continue to work with Congress to urge the removal of these restrictions. At the same time, within our existing authorities, the Department will work with MARAD and the Academy to make immediate improvements to the USMMA's financial management processes.

The contributions of the USMMA Advisory Board are already evident. Created in 2013, the Board regularly examines academics and management of the Academy and provides advice to the Superintendent. I see its members as vital partners in addressing the Visiting Team's report, and I will re-emphasize to the Board the importance of their role, and reiterate that they have full Departmental support as they work with the Superintendent to implement corrective actions.

I look forward to working with you as you finalize your recommendations and evaluation of the Academy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anthony R. Foxx". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "F".

Anthony R. Foxx