

Message on the USMMA Schedule from Admiral Helis

I know I speak for the entire Kings Point community when I express my frustration and disappointment with the current government shutdown and its impact on the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. While all the service academies are being forced to make changes as a result, the impact on the USMMA is the most severe due to the fact that our faculty and staff are nearly all civilians, and therefore subject to the shutdown furloughs that do not impact active duty military personnel.

As a result, the Academy has significantly reduced operations and administrative support programs have ceased. Up until now, we have kept midshipmen on campus in the hopes that the shutdown would be short-lived. This lack of certainty has created tremendous strain on our Midshipmen, their families and the Academy itself.

To provide some certainty to staff, faculty and Midshipmen, we have made the decision to move up our scheduled fall break from its original date of November 1-11 to take place beginning Friday, October 4 and run through Monday, October 14. By “swapping” fall break from November to next week, we can both offer a greater degree of certainty and minimize the disruptive impact the shutdown is having on our academic calendar.

If the shutdown continues through next week and we did not take this step, we would have to cancel fall break altogether to make up the lost academic days. Because the Academy’s academic calendar is nearly year-round, we have only 19 “break” days during the year to make up missed classes.

While we believe this step is helpful, we recognize, and regret, that it still has an impact on Midshipmen, parents, faculty and staff who have made plans for the scheduled November break, and we appreciate the understanding of the faculty union, in accepting this change.

Leadership at the Academy, the Maritime Administration and the Department of Transportation are working on a variety of options to address a longer-term government shutdown, should one occur.

The USMMA is closely monitoring developments during the shutdown, and will keep Midshipmen informed during the break via the academy website and through our Command Duty Office.

Thank you for your patience during this incredibly difficult time.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if the government is still shutdown at the end of fall break?

A: Midshipman, faculty and staff should monitor the Academy website for updates and can stay informed by contacting the Command Duty Officer who is available 24-hours a day. While we hope the shutdown will be resolved by the end of the newly-scheduled break, if the shutdown is still in place, we will be forced to shut down the Academy on October 15.

Q: Will intercollegiate athletic events still take place during the shutdown?

A: USMMA coaches are civilian employees, and like their academic counterparts, are subject to furlough under a shutdown due to a lapse in appropriations, so we are unable to participate in intercollegiate athletic events during the government shutdown.

Q: **Who is paying to send Midshipmen home during fall break? What happens to tickets and plans made during the original fall break?**

A: Travel costs associated with the rescheduled Fall Break are the responsibility of the Midshipmen, as they would be in normal circumstances. We regret any additional costs they may incur for changing travel plans, but believe that moving the Fall Break was the best option for both providing certainty and preserving the Fall Break itself and the academic year.

Q: **Will Midshipmen who don't have or can't make travel plans during the fall break be able to remain on campus?**

A: Yes. As normally done during breaks in the academic schedule, we will maintain a select number of staff on campus to support Midshipmen needs, including the dining hall facilities.

Q: **If Midshipmen buy plane tickets to return to campus when the Fall Break is over, but the government shutdown is still in place, who will reimburse them for their tickets?**

A: If the government shutdown lasts beyond October 15, the Academy will pay to fly Midshipmen from their home of record back to campus once the government shutdown is over. However, the Academy is not responsible for paying to fly Midshipmen back to campus from other locations or from home at the end of the rescheduled Fall Break, should the government shutdown end before October 15.

Q: **If the Academy shuts down on October 15, what will it do for Midshipmen who are unable to relocate home?**

A: Should that be the case, the Academy will work with the Midshipmen to find an alternative solution.

Q: **What about Midshipmen who are away during their sea year?**

A: The 225 Midshipmen currently at sea will be allowed to continue their training. As they complete their scheduled sea time, the USMMA will bring them back to campus, or to their homes, depending on the status of the government shutdown at that time. Some of the internships they were scheduled to participate in will also still be conducted.

Q: **The other service academies are continuing to operate. Why can't the USMMA?**

A: Many of the USMMA's faculty and staff are civilians, and therefore subject to shutdown furloughs, where the majority of the staffs at the other service academies are active duty military and not subject to furlough.