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SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

STATEMENT OF  
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SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON  
PERSONNEL  
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Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy (USNA). The Naval Academy's mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. We are developing our Navy and Marine Corps' next generation of resilient warfighters and ethical leaders of character who will preserve peace, and when called upon, prevail in conflict. I am pleased to report to you today that USNA is succeeding in its mission, and in no small part due to the support of Congress. In spite of the challenges of the recent COVID pandemic, our last four graduating classes have graduated on time, with over 4,000 newly commissioned Ensigns and Second Lieutenants joining our Navy and Marine Corps. Highlights from the Classes of 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 include:

- An average overall graduation rate of 89%, well above the DoD requirement of 75% and the U.S. 4-yr graduation rate of 27%. I believe these statistics speak not only to the quality of USNA's incoming midshipmen, but also to the hard work of our faculty, staff and coaches, and the challenging but supportive environment in which we work, educate and train.
- Average graduation rate for varsity athletes of 90%, a testament to USNA's commitment to the full development of student-athletes.
- An average of 78% of each Class' newly commissioned ensigns graduated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) degrees, exceeding the Chief of Naval Operations' requirement of 65%.

The Naval Academy assesses these graduation trends as positive, and attributes them to the effective developmental programs and processes that stem from the initial admissions process and continue through the 47-month education and leadership development experience. Notably, the most recent U.S. News & World Report College Rankings listed the Naval Academy as America's #1 top public college, #4 for best liberal arts college, and #6 for best undergraduate engineering programs.

It is important to highlight that we are a military service academy and not a college or university. Our graduates are highly sought by all of the warfighting communities of the Navy and the Marine Corps. They are prepared immediately upon commissioning to lead and fight, as evidenced by our recent graduates' performance on ships in the Red Sea.

#### Admissions Process and Criteria

As a national institution, any U.S. citizens may apply for admission to the United States Naval Academy subject to USC Title 10 regulations and DOD/Navy policy. The application for admission opens each year in January and continues to stay open as a preliminary application until the end of December. Using a student portal, candidates must submit the following application components to be considered for admission: college entrance examinations, transcripts, recommendations from school officials, extracurricular activities, candidate fitness assessment, personal history/essay, and a Blue and Gold Officer interview. Additionally, students are required to complete a medical evaluation administered by the DoD Medical Examination Review Board and to apply for an official nomination. Completed applications are processed by the admissions staff and evaluated by the Admissions Board to determine overall

qualification status and assign a score known as the Whole Person Multiple (WPM). The WPM is a merit-based tool that is used to compare candidates when nominations are received.

### *Whole Person Concept*

USNA uses a comprehensive process - a whole person assessment - in evaluating each candidate for admission. The assessment balances objective factors included in each candidate's application, such as class rank/GPA, college entrance examinations, evaluations of school officials, athletic and non-athletic extracurricular activities, athletic and non-athletic achievements, leadership, and candidate fitness assessment results, with subjective factors. Subjective factors include, but are not limited to, the strength of a candidate's high school and course load, written evaluations of school officials, Blue and Gold Officers and other letters of recommendation, personal essays, demonstrated performance in leadership positions, and interest in STEM disciplines. Both objective and subjective factors are used by the Admissions Board in determining if the candidate is qualified for admission and assigning the WPM score to each file. At no time are race, sex, or ethnicity considered in the qualification of a candidate and there are no associated demographic goals or objectives.

### *Offers of Appointment*

Offers of appointment are determined by a committee of Office of Admissions staff members, and driven largely by the Congressional nomination process codified in USC Title 10, which includes both congressional and military service-connected nominations. Priority in offering appointments by the committee is given to nominees of members of Congress, including the Title 10 requirement to select 200 congressional nominees by order of merit, and additional

appointees. Offers to candidates with service-connected nominations are made after ensuring other Title 10 requirements are satisfied. Race, sex, and ethnicity are not considered when making offers of appointment.

### *Outreach*

Like other institutions of higher education, USNA is in a war for talent. We are not only seeking the best and the brightest who can withstand the rigors of the Naval Academy's program, but also those who have the propensity to serve. USNA has boosted its outreach since 2006 to identify qualified candidates as early as middle school from every Congressional District in the country and to expose them to our campus and our midshipmen via a variety of on-campus, community, and virtual experiences.

On-campus experiences include Naval Academy Summer Seminar (NASS), which is conducted in June each year. Led by midshipmen, this program is designed to provide rising high school seniors from every congressional district a midshipman-like experience. NASS is complemented by Candidate Visit Weekends (CVWs), which are conducted during the year for both seniors and juniors, and allow students to room with and follow a midshipman's schedule. STEM Camps, like NASS, are midshipmen-led events on the campus conducted in June and focus on academic preparation for college and exposure to USNA and STEM disciplines for rising 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders. During the year, short duration STEM programs are conducted at USNA for middle and high school students. Additionally, over 10,000 school-age youth attend various USNA sports camps each year. A significant investment has also been made to create awareness and support among school officials and community leaders from across the country through the Centers of Influence (COI) orientation program, which is conducted two to three times annually. The value of getting students, their parents, and influencers (school

principals, guidance counselors, etc.) on-campus cannot be over emphasized. Students who have visited USNA, complete applications at an average rate of nearly 70% versus 35% for those who do not. And, while there is no requirement or advantage to attending STEM Camp or NASS, nearly 45% of each incoming class includes students who attended one or both programs.

USNA's community-led programs include Operations Information (OPINFO) in which nearly 500 midshipmen travel to their hometowns to visit schools, appear at media events, and speak to community groups, primarily around the Thanksgiving holiday and during the spring break leave periods. Midshipmen also participate in Admissions Forums held in local communities throughout the year and Congressional Academy Days held by members of Congress. The Admissions Staff also travels extensively throughout the year to conduct school visits, locally hosted STEM events, participate in Navy Week programs sponsored by the Navy Recruiting Command and conduct candidate engagement.

The changing landscape in college admissions has prompted USNA to adjust our outreach efforts with significant expansion into internet and virtual programs. USNA works with a marketing consultant that specializes in internet and social media advertising, mass emailing, and use of texting technology.

Despite recent challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and drops in college enrollment nationally, USNA has experienced a nearly 47% increase in our number of applications over the past 20 years. Our outreach efforts have been successful in reaching across the country, and we're proud that over the past 10 years, the number of Congressional Offices without nominations has averaged less than two per year. And our outreach is delivering dedicated, quality candidates; our yield rate (the percentage of candidates who accept an offer of

appointment) is among the highest in the nation and incoming classes have exceptional academic/physical fitness credentials that lead to impressive graduation rates.

### Leadership Laboratory

Developing leaders of character is priority #1 for the Naval Academy. The four-year leadership development curriculum is informed by conceptual frameworks; midshipmen have formal classes in each of their four years to instill principles of leadership. These principles of leadership are brought to life by a case study approach that marries the conceptual study with the practical application of leadership training.

Experiential leadership development – learning by doing – is an integral aspect of USNA’s leadership laboratory. From the moment a midshipman swears their oath on Induction Day through the day they are commissioned as an Ensign or Second Lieutenant, they undergo various experiences as an emerging leader. The experiences are rooted first and foremost in the training they receive through their Company Officers, Senior Enlisted Leaders and Brigade leadership, but also extend to the sports fields, on Yard Patrol craft and sailcraft, and during professional development opportunities over the summer training blocks with the operational Navy and Marine Corps forces. Midshipmen also participate in immersive programming through the Center for Experiential Leadership Development that provides real-world leadership experiences that complement training with Navy and Marine Corps units. USNA also recently expanded from 30 to 36 companies to improve the leader-to-led ratio, increase interaction between current and future leaders, and expose midshipmen to more of the cadre’s operational Navy and Marine Corps experience.

## Academic Program

USNA's vision is to be the premier leadership and educational institution for developing naval officers who will preserve peace and prevail in conflict. Our philosophy of education stresses attention to individual students by highly qualified faculty and staff members who are strongly committed to teaching. Classes are small, with an average size of 18-20 students. In science and engineering courses, the same professor who lectures in the classroom supervises experiments in the lab. All courses at the Naval Academy are taught and graded by faculty members, not by graduate assistants.

Our faculty is an integrated group of over 550 officers and civilians, designed to be in roughly equal numbers. Officers typically rotate to the Academy for two-to-three-year assignments, bringing fresh ideas and experiences from operational units of the Navy and Marine Corps. A cadre of about 50 officer faculty with doctorates adds another dimension to the teaching staff as Permanent Military Professors. The Academy's civilian faculty members give continuity to the educational program and create a higher education environment steeped in professional scholarship, effective teaching, and service to the institution. All career civilian faculty members have doctoral degrees, and many of them are leading scholars in their fields. Working together, our military and civilian instructors form one of the strongest and most dedicated teaching faculties of any college or university in the United States.

### *The Core Curriculum & Major Programs of Study*

The operational environment for our graduates is dynamic, occupying many domains and spatial and temporal scales. Today, perhaps even more so than in the past, a firm foundation in mathematics, physical sciences, cyber and engineering principles, and the humanities is



paramount. Without a firm knowledge foundation in these areas, naval officers will not be equipped to understand the full complexity of the modern world in order to protect America from attack, promote American prosperity, and preserve America's strategic influence. The educational core curriculum at the Naval Academy is designed to provide a robust foundation in these areas for every graduate and future officer.

At the undergraduate level, USNA's core curriculum focuses on principles providing the knowledge base from which to excel in more advanced and specific graduate, technical, or professional studies. Operational and strategic case studies are used to provide operational insights and introduce strategic thinking, and to demonstrate to the midshipmen the application of the principles covered in the core curriculum to their future operations and training. Our mission is to prepare the midshipmen with the foundational skills and knowledge to be successful in any future learning. Graduates who are proficient in scientific inquiry, logical reasoning, communication, critical thinking, and problem solving will provide an officer corps ready to lead in any warfare community of the Navy and Marine Corps.

Courses in a student's academic major also prepare them for advanced professional training and postgraduate education, which is expected of nearly all naval officers. While the majority of midshipmen freely choose their majors, the needs of the Naval Service take precedence. By order of the Navy itself, at least 65% of USNA graduates who are commissioned into the U.S. Navy must complete academic majors in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics disciplines. USNA offers 26 majors, which are divided among three Schools.

- The School of Engineering, Computing, and Weapons offers 12 majors: Aerospace Engineering, Computer Engineering, Computer Science, Cyber Operations, Data Science, Electrical Engineering, General Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Naval

Architecture and Marine Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Ocean Engineering, and Robotics and Control Engineering.

- The School of Mathematics and Science offers seven majors: Chemistry, General Science, Mathematics, Mathematics with Economics, Oceanography, Operations Research, and Physics.
- The School of Humanities and Social Sciences offers seven majors: Arabic, Chinese, English, Foreign Area Studies, History, Political Science, and Quantitative Economics.

Majors are added or removed in response to the needs of the Navy. Since 2010, we have added majors in Cyber Operations, Nuclear Engineering, Foreign Area Studies, Computer Engineering and Data Science, and at the same time retired the Information Technology major.

### *Increasing the Warfighter Focus*

USNA continues to innovate, expanding the focus of our curriculum and extracurricular activities on warfighting. In addition to recently added majors (e.g., Cyber Operations, Data Science), we have developed a Maritime Warfare core course required of all midshipmen. We've implemented a multipronged wargaming effort with a focus on Great Power Competition, including extracurricular activities and classified professional training opportunities. Furthermore, the Academy has a renewed focus in fostering midshipmen and faculty innovation in warfighting problems. Our Capstone Program, consisting of year-long projects that most of our seniors work on, includes projects that are increasingly focused on warfighting, including with Special Operations Command and Naval Special Warfare, and often involve partnerships with industry or research labs.

Students entering the Naval Academy do so with the recognition that the undergraduate educational program is among the best in the nation. A common thread throughout our curriculum is that we teach students *how* to think, not *what* to think. Midshipmen are not required to subscribe to any particular interpretative frameworks. The Academy expects graduates to become critical thinkers who are able to come to their own conclusions based on a wide variety of perspectives and narratives. We are preparing future officers that can outthink the enemy.

### *The Role of Accreditation*

Accreditation is an important process of systematic self-evaluation against externally recognized standards. USNA is institutionally accredited through its regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and every program that is eligible for professional accreditation is also accredited at the program/degree level, including Chemistry through the American Chemical Society (ACS) and through ABET for all engineering degrees and computing programs.

Regional accreditation fosters public confidence in our programs – it signifies to prospective students the quality of USNA’s education and the value of a Naval Academy degree. It is required for institutions to apply for and maintain professional accreditations (ABET and ACS) and National Collegiate Athletic Association membership, and is typically required for student entry into graduate programs. For regional accreditation, accredited status means that USNA regularly examines its programs and seeks continuous improvement within the framework of our unique mission. While having a unique mission, singular purpose, and single employer of our graduates is generally viewed as a strength by the Naval Academy community,

there are potential pitfalls. The Academy strives to ensure that the balance does not tip too far in terms of requiring a narrowly defined vocational/training experience rather than providing educational experiences focused on a strong technical core combined with a broad range of studies intended to ensure that midshipmen can apply their learning in both the standard operating and new, complex conditions that they will encounter during their Naval careers.

Program-level accreditation, through organizations like ABET and the ACS, signifies that those majors programs meet standards of educational breadth and depth for the discipline; that the facilities, faculty, and support structures provide a strong learning experience; and that graduates of the program can demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge.

### Physical Mission

The Naval Academy strives to provide exemplary programs of athletic competition and physical challenge that foster decisive leadership, teamwork, character, resilience, a passion for “winning,” and to promote lifelong physical fitness. The Brigade of Midshipmen continues to excel in physical mission achievement. Every midshipman participates in classes in combatives as well as swimming. Despite physical fitness standards that far exceed Navy-wide standards, the Naval Academy’s five-year average attrition attributable to physical readiness is less than 0.6% per class.

With 36 varsity sports, among the most of any college or university in the Nation, approximately 30% of the Brigade benefits from the challenges of these intercollegiate competitions. The Navy and Marine Corps are teams of teams, and sports develop grit, resilience, leadership skills and competence in building connectedness and esprit de corps critical to our future leaders. This past academic year, Navy’s varsity sports teams won over 60% of

their head-to-head competitions...and 15 Conference Championships. Additionally, with the majority of the Naval Academy's varsity sports competing in the Patriot League, Navy won the Presidents' Cup, awarded to the member institution with the highest cumulative sports point total for their league standings in men's and women's sports, for the tenth consecutive year. The "will to win" is an important attribute for all Naval Academy graduates.

### Infrastructure Resiliency

While our attention has been focused on developing ethical leaders of character and warfighters for the Navy and Marine Corps, we are committed to ensuring the Naval Academy has the infrastructure to maintain operations in Annapolis in the century ahead. Located at the confluence of the Severn River and Chesapeake Bay, the Naval Academy is vulnerable to storm surge associated with major weather events and localized, high-tide flooding that is exacerbated by sustained easterly or southerly winds. Since 1929, the relative sea level in Annapolis has risen slightly more than one foot, which has significantly increased the occurrences of high-tide flooding, from 2-3 times per year to 30-40 times per year, and left USNA more vulnerable to major storms. Impacts from storm surges and high-tide flooding affect daily operations through closures of roads, sidewalks and building entry points.

As directed by the FY19 NDAA, the installation undertook a major, long-term planning effort to develop a Military Installation Master Plan. Completed in 2022 through a joint effort between Commander, Naval Installations Command, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Naval Support Activity Annapolis, USNA and the City of Annapolis, the plan provides courses of action and a 40-year execution strategy to cohesively address and mitigate the combined effects of land subsidence, ground water change, coastal flooding/storm surge and inadequate

stormwater management at USNA. The first major project associated with this plan, the reconstruction and raising of Farragut and Santee Basin Seawalls and installation of floating docks, was completed last year. Two additional projects, the rebuilding and raising of the Yard Patrol Craft pier and the raising of Ramsay Rd, are underway. A sustained effort will be required in order for the Naval Academy to continue to exist and operate effectively into the future.

### Conclusion

Established by Congress in 1845, the Naval Academy has developed into a four-year, total immersion program designed to instill professional, physical, and academic excellence required to develop warfighters and leaders of character for careers in the Naval Service. Beginning with our admissions process and continuing through our many developmental opportunities, this program is designed to produce resilient officers, nurtured in the basic core values and traditions of the Naval Service. The very nature of the Naval Academy affords every midshipman the opportunity to develop character and employ leadership skills in an environment designed to be a leadership laboratory.

The Naval Academy produces approximately one-third of the Navy's Unrestricted Line Officers every year – a critical mass. And as Admiral Larson, the only two-time Naval Academy Superintendent often said, “if we at the Naval Academy do our job right, we can be the custodian of the core values of the Navy. We can set a standard for professionalism, for honor, for integrity. If we do it right, our graduates go out to the fleet and lead by example.” I would offer that the Naval Academy is in fact, doing it right.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy. While I know many esteemed leaders in Congress often visit the Naval Academy to meet with their constituents, I want to be sure this Subcommittee understands they are invited to visit our campus at any time. We would be happy and honored to support you or your staff for a tour and visit and/or lunch with midshipmen, as your schedules permit. I look forward to your questions.