

COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE TO PY20 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS AND PANELS

BACKGROUND:

America's security, prosperity and national interests are inextricably linked to the maritime domain and the demand for Coast Guard services has never been greater. Employing our unique authorities, broad jurisdiction, and expansive internal and external partnerships, we will tirelessly pursue excellence and provide our national leadership with a Coast Guard that is **Ready**, **Relevant** and **Responsive**. This requires an officer corps that possesses the leadership, intellectual capital, and strong moral character to enable mission success and foster public trust. I fully expect all officers to embrace our Core Values of *Honor*, *Respect* and *Devotion to Duty*; to rigorously adhere to the highest ethical principles; and to take a keen interest in the personal and professional development of those they lead and serve alongside.

Selection boards (commonly referred to as promotion boards), as well as assignment and selection panels, will continue to evaluate members based on their records, selecting the strongest performers and leaders with the potential for continued growth, sustained excellence and impact. Assignment and selection panels should apply the same rigor and standards as promotion boards in identifying the best qualified candidates for command assignments, educational opportunities, and other programs, though such panels may consider specialty skills and career paths in the context of a specific panel's purpose as part of broader selection criteria. Members serving on officer selection boards and panels bear a sacred trust for both the future of our Service and the future of those officers under consideration.

GUIDANCE:

Promote mission focused officers demonstrating a bias for action and advancing a Service culture worthy of our Nation's trust and confidence. These officers shall have a proven track record of delivering results, extending beyond just operational performance to the creation and execution of policies and ideas, and to the delivery of mission support and enabling capabilities. Our officers must constantly hone their competency across the *Strategic-Operational-Tactical* continuum in order to perform our complex multi-missions. We need officers who take decisive action, who are collaborative and provide proper guidance, and who empower subordinates. At times, this calls for measured or prudent risk taking, and officers must demonstrate the ability to carefully understand and accept warranted operational and/or professional risk. The Service also recognizes that smart failures in the short term can lead to long-term organizational success.

The Coast Guard increasingly carries out its missions in a joint service, interagency, or international environment with wide-ranging maritime partners and external stakeholders. A clear understanding of this operating environment is vital to our long-term success. Routinely, even our most junior officers are called upon to lead or participate in teams that work across unit/agency lines and borders. We must encourage opportunities for growth, and promote officers who demonstrate the ability to successfully lead teams and develop partnerships advancing both Coast Guard and national objectives.

The Coast Guard must have an officer corps that values continuous learning and understands that new skills and perspectives are required for the Service to continue to lead in the maritime domain. We must select officers for promotion who demonstrate the ability to evolve, learn, and shape a culture that can quickly adapt to our dynamic operating environment; that can adapt to the needs of our mission ready total workforce; and that can effectively maneuver amidst the complex joint service, interagency, intergovernmental, and international network wherein our Coast Guard operates daily.

Anchored to our Core Values, we must promote *selfless* leaders who put the mission and their people ahead of themselves by cultivating an inclusive command climate and who promote the professional development and well-being of their people. Look to select officers who are positive role models and who demonstrate loyalty to the Service, and that possess the strength of character to hold themselves and others accountable for lapses in behavior. Our officer corps must value diversity of talent, abilities and viewpoints – as well as ethnicity, gender, culture and creed. We need officers that are committed to broadening diversity and that enable our ranks to be more representative of the American public we are privileged to serve. We must focus our bias for action inward to successfully advance cultural change; tackling this challenge calls for the most adept leaders who dedicate themselves to influencing their people in a positive manner. I will keep our leadership team keenly focused on a continued commitment to fostering a culture of respect, and to ridding our ranks of sexual assault, harassment in any form, and disempowering behavior. I value officers who demonstrate courage and take on a leadership role in protecting the rights of those who report, those who have been victims and those who are accused, and expect board and panel members to do the same.

Team Coast Guard – *our mission ready total workforce* – is able to deliver valuable services to the American public because of our highly capable, uniquely qualified, and richly experienced team of active duty, reserve, auxiliary and civilian members. Strive to promote officers who mentor others and proactively create opportunities for subordinates and other team members to set and achieve professional goals.

Excellence remains our benchmark or standard and it is anchored to proficiency in craft, professionalism, and enthusiasm for the work and missions of our Service. We need officers who not only pursue personal proficiency but who can transform their experience into effective leadership and forge productive teams fueling mission performance. Strive to select officers committed to both mastery of their craft and to continuous learning as these attributes support the development of superior operational and strategic leadership. Promotions to the next higher grade are generally premised on increases in both responsibility and authority, and officers should aspire to command, command cadre, senior staff and other positions of the highest responsibility within their specialty and across the Service. Selection boards and panels shall remain mindful that our organization also vests broad authority and responsibility in positions that are not titled as "Commander or Commanding Officer," positions that carry a high level of risk and accountability. Such positions also require a high degree of professional skill, certification, licensing and proficiency requirements, and include acquisition professionals, product line managers, division chiefs/departments heads/certain other supervisor positions, staff judge advocates, senior military justice practitioners, and equivalent billets.

Board and panel members should also be cognizant of the Coast Guard's efforts to optimize return on investment in training and PCS costs by encouraging an appropriate degree of geographic stability.

As the Coast Guard will likely remain in a competitive resource environment within a department with broad responsibilities for safeguarding the American people, our homeland and our values, we must cultivate officers with the skill and savvy to employ finite resources for the greatest possible organizational impact, and who think innovatively regarding service delivery and mission performance. We must select officers who are ethical stewards of the resources they are entrusted with, and who enforce the highest levels of professional accountability, instilling financial stewardship and budget discipline in every endeavor.

APPOINTMENT AND SELECTION OF CHIEF WARRANT OFFICERS, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES:

Appoint or promote candidates who are masters of their occupational specialty, and who have displayed superb leadership and managerial acumen. Those selected should display enthusiasm for pursuing new challenges and experiences in the Service, and demonstrate attributes that will enable rapid assimilation into our officer corps. Select candidates who have modelled adherence to our Core Values throughout their careers and fostered positive command climates. Chief Warrant Officers are frequently leadership guideposts aboard our cutters, in the Sector Prevention bullpen, or in naval engineering circles to name just a few assignments where our warrant officers interact daily with members of both our junior officer and enlisted ranks, and hence play a pivotal role in the development of those workforces.

Reserve CWOs and those seeking reserve warrant appointments are expected to demonstrate the same progression in responsibility and technical experience/prowess as their active counterparts.

SELECTION TO O-3 and O-4, AND PANELS CONSIDERING OFFICERS IN THOSE GRADES:

Promote action/results oriented junior officers who possess core competency and professional knowledge in their assigned duties, an abiding commitment to our Core Values, and evolving/developing leadership skills and significant leadership potential.

Officers in these grades should vigorously pursue and leverage opportunities to acquire and employ skills within their specialty through frontline operational experience, the delivery of mission support capabilities, or formal training. In cases where officers have limited opportunity for direct operational experience, these officers should seek responsibilities that enable operations or provide exposure to operations. Attaining key qualifications or certifications within prescribed time windows is the expectation across all specialties, and will optimally position an officer for continued professional growth and promotion. Advanced education and special assignments, e.g., White House/DHS/Joint Staff, military aide-de-camp, congressional affairs liaison/fellow, international, etc..., complement and bolster professional development and experience gained through operational assignments or specialty. These challenging opportunities

reflect intellectual energy, broadened perspective and adaptability – traits the Coast Guard values in junior officer development. However, ahead of O-3/O-4 selection boards and panels, some technical career fields afford less opportunity for such opportunities. When such opportunities are available to mid-grade officers, they must be appropriately integrated into career timelines based on the particular specialty profile. Of note, the investment the Service makes in officers selected for key professional training opportunities such as naval flight training or advanced education is significant, and reflects the trust and confidence the Service has already placed in these officers to serve in specialty fields such as aviation (e.g. duty standing pilot).

Coast Guard missions are executed in a fast-paced and often unforgiving environment. Junior officers will make mistakes as part of the learning process. Evaluate errors against their impact, the underlying conduct and/or behavior, and Service standards. Consider subsequent performance and conduct that positively reflect lessons learned and demonstrate the officer's potential to serve in the next higher grade.

As junior officers progress in both experience and rank, and their span of control increases, their ability to affect a broader swath of mission activity expands considerably; therefore, their developmental focus should shift from the tactical/technical to leadership and the shaping and forging of solutions to increasingly difficult challenges. A broadening of experience beyond their initial in-specialty assignments can be obtained through joint tours, professional military education, advanced degrees, interagency experience, etc... Such opportunities in an officer's career profile are indicators of expanded knowledge and skill.

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

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

Officers competing for selection to O-5 or O-6 are expected to have already broadened their skills and perspectives, either within specialty or through out-of-specialty experiences. These officers must demonstrate the leadership skills to create and guide diverse teams as they solve complex and/or ambiguous problems. Promote officers with a sustained track record of exceptional performance, including in command cadre or equivalent assignments demanding significant levels of trust, responsibility, discretion, and decision making. Selected officers must be capable of delivering excellence in mission execution and/or mission support, including more narrowly defined technical specialties, and must be ready to assume significant leadership positions with responsibilities that include internal and external representation of our Service, and formulating strategic foundations for the future.

Our O-5s and O-6s are highly visible senior leaders and I expect every such officer to be a role model of ethical behavior and inclusive leadership. Select those officers that maintain high standards of performance and accountability while creating/fostering positive work environments where innovation, creativity and collaboration thrive, and where the professional development and well-being of all assigned personnel is a top priority. As the Service will assuredly be challenged to meet new and emerging mission demands, potentially in a resource constrained

environment, senior officers will be called upon to find new and/or more efficient ways to meet our commitments to the Department of Homeland Security, to the DoD Combatant Commanders/Joint Force, and to the maritime interests of the Nation writ large. This may call for changes in the way we employ assets, manage people, and interact with partners.

Promote officers demonstrating the ability to weigh and manage operational, political, legal, and fiscal risk across the full spectrum of Coast Guard activities. We must be guided by officers with a strategic view and the ability to develop effective solutions, often working cohesively with joint, interagency and other maritime stakeholders, or political entities in order to accomplish our missions. Promote candidates who have pursued advanced or other professional education and/or fellowships, and have taken on assignments that provide experience working across the joint, interagency, inter-governmental, and international sectors in both public and private realms.

To meet current and emerging Service demands, the Coast Guard has required some officers to concentrate their assignments within their respective specialty areas. Officers can acquire vital broadening experiences through participation in studies, task forces or special assignments that provide a comprehensive view of major issues for our Service.

Senior reserve officers must be experts in their mobilization specialty and have a track record of positively influencing reservists to grow their skills and readiness. They should pursue joint service or interagency expertise through assignment progression and educational opportunities such as the Reserve War and Staff Colleges. Senior reserve officers must be prepared to craft solutions to sustain a vibrant and ready workforce. Of those reserve officers eligible for retention, officers with less than one year of service in the grade of O-5 or O-6 by 30 June of the year in which a retention board convenes shall be selected for retention unless their documented performance indicates retention is undesirable or inappropriate.

O-6 CONTINUATION AND SELECTION TO FLAG RANK:

The Coast Guard Flag Officer corps must be comprised of our very best leaders with the ability to set a strategic vision and guide our organization during even the most demanding and dynamic of times. Select those few officers that display innovation, entrepreneurship, independence of thought, and the ability to lead teams to achieve substantive results. These traits are indicative of officers who can solve complex problems and move our organization forward. We need senior officers with a proven track record of creating a work environment for subordinates that encourages innovation and rational risk taking.

The strongest candidates for flag selection will have distinguished careers that include successful command or equivalent assignments demanding similar trust, responsibility and decision making. At this senior level, these officers must demonstrate the ability to gain and/or leverage knowledge, and effectively lead in areas outside of their career experiences, relying appropriately on subordinate subject matter experts and delegation when prudent. Candidates must be able to provide/articulate a clear understanding of the Coast Guard's relevance to the Nation and the maritime community, and they should have led the Service through complex challenges requiring an optimal blend of keen intellect, political savvy, exceptional communications skills,

and agile execution. They will also have a firm grasp of Service-wide challenges which require strong strategic leadership.

Flag nominees are highly respected by their peers, those they lead, and the appropriate external stakeholders. They possess unassailable character and integrity that will allow them to lead by example. They successfully balance humility with confidence, embodying the concept of servant leadership. While compassionate and understanding of the potential flaws and/or shortcomings of our members, they also understand balancing the critically important public trust of our Service, and the necessity of holding all accountable to the highest standards of conduct, performance and professionalism.

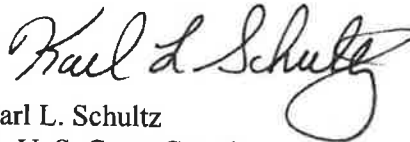
The Coast Guard needs Flag officers who take the *enterprise view* and act as catalyst for constructive change. Promote candidates who are willing to make difficult decisions to ensure the Coast Guard's long-term success, and can balance those choices with near term imperatives. Select officers who are truly dedicated to shaping a mission ready total workforce that is ready to meet emerging challenges and nurture the next generation of Coast Guard leadership.

Our Flag corps serves as the Commandant's senior field commanders, representatives and liaisons – essentially, the face of the Service. Flag nominees must have keen political acumen and an clear understanding of how the Coast Guard fits into the broader structure of, and can create and bolster relationships and partnerships with, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense/Joint Force, the federal/state/local government interagency construct, the international community, and the private sector.

O-6s selected for continuation or retention should demonstrate the aforementioned attributes and qualities needed in our flag corps. Their records must reflect a sustained record of exceptional performance, including successful command or equivalent assignments that demand similar trust, responsibility and decision making. Given the competitiveness of O-6 continuation, only select those Captains with the clear drive and passion to continue to serve with distinction. These officers generally occupy positions of significant impact and influence on both the strategic direction of the Service and the well-being of our mission ready total workforce, and as such, must possess the skill, character and integrity to support our senior leaders and to guide the next generation of Coast Guard men and women.

CONCLUSION:

The center of gravity of the world's best coast guard – the United States Coast Guard, is our people and your service on an officer selection board and/or panel entrusts you with shaping the officer corps that will set the leadership trajectory of our Service for years and decades to come. Thank you for undertaking this critically important responsibility.



Karl L. Schultz
Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant