

COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE TO PY23 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS AND PANELS

BACKGROUND:

The American public depends on the Coast Guard for our Nation's safety, security, and prosperity in the maritime domain. We need an officer corps with the leadership and character to achieve mission excellence and foster public trust. Our leaders at every level must excel in their performance of duties, while also connecting the full potential of each individual to our greater purpose as a Service.

While boards and panels should apply the same rigor in selection, they may serve different purposes. Selection boards should focus on the general characteristics of an officer who can lead at the next level and continue our Service's tradition of leadership and excellence. Assignment and selection panels may tailor their consideration of skills and career paths to the purpose of the panel and strategic aims of the Service.

GUIDANCE:

Strong leadership and character are the foundation of officer performance at all levels.

Coast Guard officers lead themselves first, by living by our Core Values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. They deliberately model those values in action every day, making their positive example inspiring for others. They have a habit of continuous learning and self-development, honing their proficiency in leadership and in their assigned duties. They also build a broad understanding of the Coast Guard and the world we operate in through self-study and higher education. They persistently care for their own health and wellness. They possess the emotional intelligence necessary to recognize how their words and actions affect others. That recognition is grounded in the understanding that each individual is unique. Officers should value others' experiences, perspectives, and ideas.

Officers are also inspirational, connecting with crews and individuals to help them achieve personal and organizational goals beyond what they thought possible, while taking the very best care of them. They make decisions and give clear direction in a moment but strive to engage people on the foundation of strong relationships built over time. Officers are leaders who provide the clarity necessary to successfully complete tasks and who help people understand why the assigned tasks are important. They can see the way ahead through fog and ambiguity and communicate a vision for the future. Officers can successfully engage with partners, stakeholders, and the public to accomplish our missions and build trust.

Officers achieve the best team performance by valuing and actively soliciting the experiences, insights, thoughts, and views of every individual. They bring every team member into mission execution, build a sense of camaraderie, and provide a strong sense of belonging. All officers skillfully apply the tools of our talent management system to support our people and families, uphold the standards of our organization, and achieve mission excellence.

Officers demonstrate both followership and leadership up and down the chain of command. They understand organizational goals, align their own work to these goals, and help others understand the bigger picture. They are humble.

Officers empower innovation and recognize when their subordinates have great ideas worthy of pursuit. Demonstrating a bias for action, they have the courage to adapt to a changing world, articulating their ideas to superiors or subordinates with equal skill.

As the Service transforms our talent management system, a cohort of officers will be the first to take career risk by utilizing innovative personnel policies. Boards and panels must recognize that officers who forge new ways to serve are demonstrating leadership and commitment to organizational change. For example, as the Service provides greater opportunities for geographic stability, boards and panels should select those officers who best demonstrate leadership, sustained exceptional performance, and character in assignments of increasing responsibility, regardless of the location of those assignments.

You should value the leadership potential of an officer over any specific career path and strive to capture the full range of talent in our Service, particularly for strong performers who may have followed a non-traditional route to the position or rank under consideration.

CWO:

Appoint candidates who are masters of their occupational specialty, who have displayed superb leadership and managerial acumen, as well as adherence to our Core Values. 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.

Promote or retain those to the next highest grade who have successfully enculturated themselves and have shown the ability to lead, work collaboratively, get results, and make a difference. Chief Warrant Officers and new appointees should have strong mentorship skills, professional competence, and interpersonal aptitude as they play a pivotal role in the development of our junior officer and enlisted workforces.

O-3 and O-4:

Promote results-oriented officers who have built proficiency in a primary specialty, professional knowledge in their assigned duties, and demonstrate significant leadership potential. Junior officers should vigorously pursue proficiency by acquiring and continuing to practice specialty skills through frontline operational experience, delivery of mission support, or performance of key enabling functions such as intelligence, legal, international affairs, finance, and external affairs.

Junior officers will make mistakes as part of the learning process in our fast-paced and demanding operating environment. Evaluate errors against their impact, the underlying conduct and/or behavior, and Service standards. Consider subsequent conduct that positively reflects

lessons learned and demonstrates the officer's potential to serve in a position of increased responsibility, always bearing in mind our Core Values and duty to the public.

Officers approaching mid-grade rank should broaden their developmental focus or perspective beyond their assigned billet or primary specialty. Look for officers with intellectual energy and perspective who advance the Service's strategic priorities, such as you might find in impactful programmatic positions, special assignments, or joint/interagency tours. You should value the investment our Service makes in officers selected for advanced education or significant professional training (e.g., naval flight training, fellowships, and post-graduate school) which reflect the potential for future leadership the Service has already identified in these officers. Officers who achieve professional certifications or licenses relevant to the Coast Guard should also be valued.

O-5 and O-6:

Officers competing for selection to O-5 or O-6 are expected to have broad skills and perspectives. These officers must create and guide diverse teams to solve complex or ambiguous problems. Promote officers with a sustained record of exceptional performance, particularly in command cadre or equivalent assignments that demand significant levels of trust, responsibility, discretion, and decision-making. Selected officers must be capable of delivering mission excellence in positions of significant leadership or responsibility that include internal and external representation of our Service, and strategic planning for the future. Select those officers who maintain high standards of performance while fostering positive work environments.

The Service will be challenged to meet new and emerging mission demands. Senior officers will be called on to find new ways to meet our commitments to customers and stakeholders. Promote senior officers who demonstrate the ability to deliver superior results while managing operational, readiness, political, legal, and fiscal risk across the full spectrum of Coast Guard activities. Tailor this factor in evaluating officers who demonstrate analogous ability in specialized career paths that are essential to support and execute our missions. We must be guided by officers with a strategic view and the ability to develop effective and innovative solutions, working closely with peers in the Service and our joint, interagency, or maritime stakeholders, and political entities to accomplish our missions. The evolving demands on our Service will require senior officers who are effective change agents that can translate strategic intent into the collective actions necessary to achieve our shared goals.

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 the most demanding and dynamic of times. Select those few officers who 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 in an increasingly dynamic environment. We need senior officers with a proven record of creating a work environment that encourages innovation and prudent risk taking. We need senior officers who lead with a collaborative spirit within, outside, and across the Service.

The strongest candidates for flag selection will have distinguished careers that include successful command or equivalent assignments that involve professional risk, demand similar trust, responsibility, decision-making, and proven results. At this senior level, these officers must demonstrate the ability to gain and leverage knowledge, and effectively lead in areas outside of their career experiences, relying on subordinate subject matter experts and delegation when prudent. Candidates must be able to articulate a clear understanding of the Coast Guard's relevance to the Nation and the maritime community, and they should be ready to lead the Service through complex challenges requiring an optimal blend of keen intellect, political savvy, exceptional communications skills, and agile execution. The best officers will also be those who have the clear potential to build and lead a diverse and inclusive Coast Guard.

Flag nominees are highly respected by their peers, those they lead, and external stakeholders. They possess unassailable character and integrity that will allow them to lead by example. They successfully balance humility with confidence. The Coast Guard needs Flag officers who take an enterprise view and act as catalysts for constructive change. Promote candidates who demonstrate the courage 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 total workforce that is ready to meet emerging challenges and nurture the next generation of Coast Guard leadership.

Flag nominees must have keen political acumen and the ability to strengthen 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 involve professional risk, demand similar trust, responsibility, decision-making, and proven results. Given the competitiveness of O-6 continuation, only select those Captains with the clear drive and passion to continue to serve with distinction.

RESERVE:

The Reserve Component (RC) is a national asset and the Service's ready response force for incident management. The RC is a contingency mobilization-based workforce, sometimes used for augmentation, trained to meet our Title 10 and Title 14 activation and deployment requirements in the prioritized mission areas of: Defense Readiness; Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security (PWCS); Incident Management/Response; and Mission Support. Promote Reservists who both possess the skills required of their PAL position and who have also taken the extra steps necessary to attain higher levels of proficiency in key contingency response mission areas, to include ICS qualifications. Like their Active Duty counterparts, senior officers shall be experts, mid-grade officers and CWOs shall be competent technical specialists, and junior officers shall be dynamically developing apprentices. Officers shifting from the mid to senior grades require greater emphasis on leadership, depth and diversity of experience necessary

to effectively work with the various federal, state, and local organizations they will encounter during a contingency response. Depth and diversity of experience may be obtained through assignments, mobilizations, and education. It is critical that Reservists make efficient use of drill time to ensure our workforce is ready. Promote Reservists who have demonstrated the ability to achieve superior training and readiness results for those they supervise. Of those Reservists eligible for retention, consider the amount of time in grade each officer has had to demonstrate their potential. However, time in grade cannot be the sole criteria because the Service can only afford to retain those Reservists with the proven skills and leadership abilities to meet mobilization requirements.

CONCLUSION:

Our people are our greatest strength. You bear a sacred trust for both the future of our Service and those officers under consideration. Thank you for undertaking this critically important responsibility.



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Commandant

