Navigating the Service Academy and ROTC Application Process

Session D.5
10:15am to 11:15am; June 14, 2017

Chris McMunn, former Coast Guard Officer, Associate Director for Operations, U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Lisa Hillhouse, retired Air Force Officer, Independent College Adviser, Hillhouse College and Career Advising
Service Academies

U.S. Military Academy
West Point, New York
Founded 1802

U.S. Naval Academy
Annapolis, Maryland
Founded 1845

U.S. Air Force Academy
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Founded 1954
Service Academies

U.S. Coast Guard Academy
New London, Connecticut
Founded 1876

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
Kings Point, New York
Founded 1943
How is Life Different at a Service Academy?

Education and Training

- All students earn BS degrees
  - STEM focused, even for Humanities/Liberal Arts majors
- Challenging course loads (ex. 18-21 credits a semester)
- Every student is a scholar athlete
- Train most of the year (including two-thirds of the summer)
- Military discipline and structure with leadership development
- End Goal: Serve the country as a military officer
Timeline

- Report as a cadet/midshipman: Late June/Early July
- Visit the Service Academy
- Await evaluation and status
- Complete testing/exams
- Obtain nomination: Fall/Winter of Senior year
- Complete Service Academy forms
- Apply for a nomination
- Start a file at the Service Academy: Spring of Junior year
- Determine if basic requirements are met

Graphic from “The Service Academy Application Process”
Terminology

• Pre-Candidate
• Candidate
• Nomination
• Appointment
• Cadet/Midshipman
• CFA/PFE
• DoDMERB
• Service Obligation
• Commission
Qualifications

• Basic/Legal Requirements
  ✓ 17-22 years old*  ✓ U.S. Citizen
  ✓ No Legal Dependents  ✓ Unmarried
  *USMMA – 25 years old

• Academic
  ✓ Above Average HS/College Record
  ✓ Strong Performance on ACT or SAT

• Extracurricular & Character
  ✓ Active in High School/Local Community
  ✓ Music/Athletics/Other  ✓ Leadership

• Medical & Physical Fitness
  ✓ Medically Qualified by DoDMERB; or Medical Waiver from Academy
  ✓ Good Performance on CFA or PFE
Academic Requirements

- **English** 4 Years
- **Mathematics** 4 Years (Pre-Calculus)
- **Laboratory Science** 3 Years (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
- **Social Science** 3 Years*
- **Foreign Language** 2 Years*
- **Technology** 1 Year*

* Varies by Academy
Evaluation Process

Academic (60%)
- High School Rank
- SAT or ACT (Optional Writing)

Non-Academic (30%)
- Extracurricular Activities
- Demonstrated Leadership
- Instructor Evaluations
- Essays and Writing Samples
- Letters of Recommendation
- Academy Interview

Physical Fitness (10%)
- Candidate Fitness Assessment
- Athletic Participation
Evaluation Process

Coast Guard Academy = 100% Holistic Review
Class Profiles (2016 Cycle)

CGPA (out of 4.0), ACT Composite, SAT CR/M, Acceptance Rate

- Air Force 3.87, 30, 640, 670, 11.8%
- Navy 3.89, 31, 625, 655, 13%
- Army 3.70, 29, 634, 652, 11%
- Coast Guard 3.81, 28, 650, 610, 16%
- Merchant Marine 3.60, 28, 600, 626, 18%

(Rates comparable to Penn, Duke, Pomona, Johns Hopkins, Rice...)
Nominations

**Congressional**
- Members of Congress are authorized five (5) spots per Service Academy at any one time; normally one per year
- Member may nominate up to ten (10) candidates per Service Academy vacancy
- Vice President is also authorized five (5) at large spots per Service Academy

**Non-Congressional**
- President may nominate children of military members, 100% disabled veterans, and Medal of Honor recipients
- Service Secretary may nominate enlisted members
- ROTC/JROTC members may be nominated by school
- Academy Superintendents may also nominate at large

Apply to all eligible sources. Check for deadlines—most are early.

Note: U.S. Coast Guard Academy does not require a nomination.
Medical Qualification

- Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB)
- Candidate completes local examination
- DoDMERB results:
  - ✅ Meets Standard
  - ⚠️ Remedial
  - ✋ Does Not Meet Standards
- Medical Waivers Granted by Academy

Starting the process early is key—25% of applicants are medically DQ’d
Common Medical Disqualifiers

- Asthma since age 13
- Orthopedic Repairs
- Braces/Dental Issues
- Vision: 20/400; not correctable to 20/20
- Prescription Meds
- Sleepwalking
- Eating Disorders
- Color Vision Deficiencies (USCGA/USMMA/USNA)
- ADD/ADHD, Learning Disabilities, Dysgraphia
Initial/Basic Orientation Program

- Training begins in late June/early July
  “Beast, BCT, Indoc, Plebe Summer, Swab Summer”
  - Seven Weeks until mid/late August
  - Transition from individuals into a team
  - Physical, mental, emotional challenges
  - Survival and small arms training
  - Leadership and teamwork emphasis
  - Recognition as a cadet/midshipman
Summer Career Orientation

Air Force/Army
Aviation; Career Exploration

Coast Guard/MMA/Navy
Life at Sea; Career Exploration

Army
Tactical training in a field environment
Preparatory Programs

**Sponsored**
- Service Academy pays tuition and enlists candidate; military pay and benefits
- Strong candidates who need extra academic help
- High probability of appointment to next class if academic/conduct/fitness conditions are achieved
- Can be in the citizenship process

**Self Prep**
- Voluntary enrollment in private preparatory school
- Must reapply and follow same application review process as other candidates applying to Academy
- Scholarships are available; excellent path to many other commissioning sources
- Must obtain new nomination for appointment

**USAFA**: (USAFA Prep); **USMA** (USMAPS/West Point Prep); **USNA** (NAPS)
**USCGA**: Georgia Military College, Marion Military Institute & NAPS
**USMMA**: Marion Military Institute & New Mexico Military Institute
Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)

- **Reserve Officer Training Corps** - a P/T program for F/T college students at civilian colleges
- Army, Navy/Marines and Air Force offer it at colleges throughout the U.S.
- Generally a 4 year program

- Academic classes (electives) on military topics
- Leadership labs (run by cadets)
- Athletic training
- Career exposure
- Scholarship & career opportunities similar to the academies

Same End Goal
Senior Military Colleges (ROTC+)

- Primarily public 4 year colleges with pro-military environment
- Active Corps of Cadets Program (military dorms, daily PT, leadership and service emphasis)
- Not all cadets will earn a commission
- Apply to Corps with college application

- Virginia Tech
- Texas A&M
- Norwich University
- University of North Georgia
- The Citadel
- Virginia Military Institute
Academy Summer Opportunities

- Summer Seminar/Summer Leadership Experience/AIM: High school juniors apply in early winter. 1 week orientation to STEM fields and Academy life. Highly competitive

- Athletic Camps: Available to middle and high school students (numerous sports). Open to the public

- USNA STEM Camps: Available to middle and high school students to explore STEM fields. Competitive

- Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Camps: Available to 16+ year olds. Career exposure to engineering opportunities and mentoring. Competitive
Academy Admissions Tips

- Admissions is a lengthy process – start preparing early! Sophomore or junior year is ideal
- Candidates evaluated on the “whole person” concept
- Integrity, character, moral background important (alcohol/drug use, arrests a problem)
- Candidates need have a solid CGPA and strong test scores (SAT or ACT) for direct admission. Essay/Writing portion not required
- Every student is a scholar athlete. Usually no athletics = no admission
- You must be medically and physically qualified (tests for both)
- Unique life experiences, language/travel, hardships, diversity (ethnicity, geographic, socioeconomic) important
- Most academies require a liaison officer interview(s)
- You must have a congressional nomination except Coast Guard Academy
Final Points

• DEMONSTRATING INTEREST is HUGE

• FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Every interaction with your liaison, academy, or congressional office is an interview

• Apply to EVERY nominating source

• Again, start preparing early (summer programs, learn about the military, prepare academically, build your resume, etc.)

• Mock interviews are helpful

• Plan ahead to finish ahead of deadlines - there may be complications with medical exams or injuries that prevent students from meeting accession requirements

• Each school has its own level of competitiveness
  • CGA is extremely difficult, USAFA & USNA very challenging, MMA and USMA are slightly easier

HAVE ALTERNATIVE PLANS (ROTC, PREP SCHOOL, REAPPLY)
Who Thrives as a Cadet/Midshipman?

- Highly Motivated
- Leader of Character
- Gives 110%
- Adventurous
- Selfless
- Hard Working
- Proactive
- Academically, Physically, Mentally Strong
- Desire To Be Your Best
Resources

- USMA: www.usma.edu
- USNA: www.usna.edu
- USAFA: www.usafa.af.mil
- USCGA: www.uscga.edu
- USMMA: www.usmma.edu
- Regional Academy Admissions Officers (Active duty junior officers based at the academies)
- Local Area Representatives (Field Rep, BGO, ALO, Admissions Partner)
Questions?

Chris McMunn, MS
Associate Director for Operations
U.S. Coast Guard Academy Admissions
chris.a.mcmunn@uscga.edu

Lisa Hillhouse, MHR
Lt Col, USAFR Retired
Hillhouse College and Career Advising
HillhouseCollegeAdvising@gmail.com

Thanks to Donna White and Kalith Smith for sharing their “The Service Academy Application Process” presentation