

COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE

TO PY07 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS

1. The Coast Guard has experienced two "All Hands Evolutions" this decade – the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In each case we met the challenges – our forces performed superbly, innovated brilliantly and earned us national respect and admiration. Because of our successes, we are visible, trusted and respected today like never before. Our value proposition to the American public lies in our ability and authority to fluidly shift platforms and personnel among diverse roles and capably and competently perform our missions. Highly visible, successful performance yields higher expectations and increased responsibilities and public trust. We must accept this trust humbly and responsibly, and purposefully act with strategic intent. We must promote officers who can excel in this climate by leading people, and managing platforms and support to achieve optimal mission execution in a resource constrained environment.
2. Our selection board system uses either a fully qualified or best-qualified standard for selecting officers. It is designed to select those officers meeting the appropriate standard without regard to their particular specialty. There are no preferred career paths, either command or staff. Rather, you should consider whether an officer has made meaningful or out-of-the-ordinary contributions within their area of responsibility in either supporting or executing Coast Guard missions. To assist you in this endeavor, you shall consider the factors below as you evaluate the officers' records.
 - a. **BILLET DESCRIPTION:** Given the changes in our organization over the past several years, many officers are serving in assignments that may not be fully understood solely by their titles. In your evaluation, ensure understanding of the full scope of the officers' duties and assignments; carefully review the "Description of Duties" block of the officers' OERs (block 2). You should pay close attention to the overall scope of authority and responsibilities for all positions, command and non-command.
 - b. **ASSIGNMENTS:**
 - i. Board members are reminded that while officers have input to their assignment process, ultimately, they are issued orders based on the needs of the Service. Boards should not base decisions on speculation as to why an officer was assigned to a certain billet.
 - ii. The Coast Guard's operational excellence requires a systems-based approach. Every specialty community contributes to our overall success.
 - iii. Because of declining opportunities for assignment of junior officers afloat, the decision was made in 2004 to discontinue sending all Academy graduates to sea. In this regard, the board should avoid making value

judgments about individual officers starting their careers afloat as compared to ashore. All officers are assigned to billets to meet specific Service needs.

c. OFFICER EVALUATION REPORTS :

- i. Many officers are detailed to postgraduate or advanced/specialized training. While assigned to these duties, the majority of OERs will consist solely of their course grades. There will not be, nor is there expected to be, detailed performance information while assigned to duty under instruction.
- ii. Over the past few years, we have noticed that the Comparison Scale/Rating Scale (block 9 on the OER form) has been creeping to the right, mostly at the O-5 and O-6 paygrades. This emphasizes the importance of closely evaluating narrative comments. You are reminded that the Comparison Scale/Rating Scale marks should not be viewed as indicating any type of trend from one report to the next, and that reporting officers may be more carefully scrutinizing the marks they give.

3. FOR SELECTION TO ALL OFFICER GRADES:

- a. **CONTINUOUS REINFORCEMENT OF CORE VALUES:** Officers must consistently demonstrate character that reflects the Coast Guard core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. Our core values are a force multiplier as was demonstrated during the Hurricane Katrina response. Integrity is foremost among the traits that we expect in our leaders. Through their personal example, conduct, and decisions – every day, on and off duty – they should instill in their people the culture of our core values.
- b. **ABILITY TO ALIGN WITH THE COMMANDANT'S INTENT:** The Commandant's Intent represents my priorities for the Coast Guard, which are Mission Execution, People, Platforms, and Mission Support. **Mission Execution** is why we exist, and our mission is to protect the American public in the maritime domain against all hazards and all threats. **People:** To execute our missions, we will promote officers who have the necessary technical expertise, management and leadership skills. We will promote officers who will improve upon our workplace climate to better ensure every member is valued for their performance, teamwork, creativity, diversity and unique perspectives. **Platforms:** We will promote officers who understand how equipment and tools (platforms), and their effective use, materially contribute to mission execution. **Mission Support:** We must implement robust systems and streamlined processes that match the multi-missioned demands of our service. Officers you select for promotion must be committed to igniting passion, motivation and innovation throughout the workforce so that each person in the support chain sees the critical role they play in mission execution.

- c. **PRINCIPLES OF OPERATIONS:** These principles – Clear Objective, Effective Presence, Unity of Effort, On-Scene Initiative, Flexibility, Managed Risk, Restraint – are also a force multiplier and together create an organizational **bias for action**. When confronted with a crisis, our people do not hesitate to assess risk, adapt the plan, and take swift and appropriate action in support of the mission objectives. We must select officers who demonstrate these qualities and understand the principles of operations. Look for major accomplishments and discount minor errors. Officers should be anticipatory and innovative, even if unconventional in their methods, as long as those methods comply with law, regulation, doctrine, and core values. Officers should also apply these principles to those who work with them, encourage innovation, and help their people apply the lessons learned for continuous systemic improvement.
 - d. **READINESS AND RESPONSIVENESS:** We are first responders, ready for **all hazards, all threats** in the maritime domain, every hour and every day of the year. We are ready today, and always vigilantly preparing for tomorrow. The officer corps must be adaptable and flexible to meet challenges resulting from the dynamic environment within which the Coast Guard operates. Selectees should have demonstrated that they seek the opportunity to pursue excellence, see opportunity in change, adapt readily, and lead their units and personnel forward with optimism.
 - e. **PARTNERSHIPS:** We need officers who can operate and support operations in a linked and seamless fashion with partners, especially with regard to major responses to events. We need officers who know how to form key and successful partnerships and coordinate efforts with DHS components; sister Services; other federal, state and local agencies; and the private sector as we work together to provide for the safety and security of the U. S. Maritime Domain.
 - f. **FOSTER DIVERSITY:** The Coast Guard is firmly committed to equal treatment and opportunity for all personnel. Diversity is not limited to the traditional areas of race, gender, color, and creed. Diversity is also the diversity of thought, experience, perspective, and culture. Selectees must, through their actions, mentor, promote diversity and foster cohesiveness and equal treatment in the workforce to gain value for the Service.
4. **FOR SELECTION TO O-3 AND O-4:** Officers primarily develop their specialty/technical/professional expertise in the O1-O4 pay grades through assignments, on-the-job training, and formal education, or any combination of these. By developing expertise as a junior officer, these officers not only contribute the expertise they have acquired, they lay the foundation for contributing to the Service at more senior levels.
5. **FOR SELECTION TO O-5 AND O-6:** By the time officers compete for promotion to these ranks, they are generally top performers in specialty. In addition to performing technical or specialized aspects of their assignments well, officers in the O-5 and O-6 grades must demonstrate that they possess the leadership, management, and professional

skills necessary to obtain optimal performance from people. Today the environment in which the Coast Guard operates is increasingly complex and technologically oriented. To meet current and emerging Service demands, the Coast Guard is requiring more officers to remain within their respective specialty areas. As officers move into senior ranks, they must have an understanding of the major issues facing the Coast Guard as a whole in order to best contribute, through their particular expertise, to the overall needs of the Service. This understanding of macro Service issues can be acquired in many ways even within specialty, through assignment diversity (different type of unit/different type of billet/different geographic location), participation in studies and task forces, and special assignments which provide a more comprehensive understanding of issues important to our Service. Board members shall not place undue emphasis on “out-of-specialty tours” or “command cadre” assignment histories that may have been considered requisite in the past for selection to O-5 and O-6.

Because of the dramatically increased scope of authority and responsibility for O-6 positions, officers you select to serve in this grade must be able to make the leap from hands on management of the day-to-day details to empowering their people to perform those functions while they take a strategic view, including a broad understanding of the joint and interagency arenas. They must be capable of acting with vision in a complex and uncertain environment. They must have the ability to maintain our multi-mission effectiveness and functionality with the capability to make risk-based decisions under stressful circumstances. They must demonstrate the public acumen and capability to work cohesively with our joint and interagency partners to optimize mission execution. They must understand how Coast Guard budgets and business systems impact operational outputs. The qualities that we look for in Flag officers should be apparent in our best-qualified O-6's.

6. **FOR SELECTION TO FLAG RANK:** Flag officers greatly influence the success of the Coast Guard, both internally and externally. They serve as the Commandant's senior field representatives, Coast Guard program directors, and in positions of significant responsibility in other agencies and military services. They are members of the Commandant's senior leadership team and must contribute substantially to the advancement of Service goals.
 - a. **VISION:** The world in which we operate is not static. The President and Congress created and fundamentally restructured organizations and relationships to address and mitigate emerging national threats and vulnerabilities. Our capabilities, competencies, organizational structure and processes must change accordingly, and we need flag officers who articulate a vision, embrace change, work together and act boldly and decisively to execute shared objectives that have been determined to best serve the national interest.
 - b. **LEADERSHIP:** The future of the Coast Guard requires enlightened and empowering leaders in our Flag corps. Selectees must be our very best leaders and have demonstrated especially strong commitment to our core values, to achieving the Coast Guard's established goals and to empowering and nurturing

the next generation of Coast Guard leaders. They have a special responsibility to be at the forefront of advancing initiatives that benefit our people. They should be charismatic leaders who excite their people and clearly convey to every member of the Coast Guard Team how his or her role contributes to mission execution and by extension to visible, tangible national outcomes. They should be leaders who are collaborative, value transparency of information, and who are decisive.

- c. **PARTNERING:** Selectees must have the ability to excel at forming tactical, operational and strategic partnerships within the Coast Guard and in the joint and interagency arenas as well as with state and local government and the private sector.
- d. **PUBLIC PRESENCE:** Selectees must have the knowledge, presence, confidence, and bearing to represent the federal government in situations of national interest. They must demonstrate political savvy and a level of professionalism reflective of both the excellence of the Coast Guard and an ability to impact national-level policy processes. Flag officers must be articulate and persuasive advocates for the Coast Guard. Continuing intellectual development and external awareness of national and international political, economic, and social issues and trends over the course of a career enables this capability.
- e. **KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:** Selectees must have a broad and in-depth intellectual capacity to learn, retain, and apply knowledge. They must have keen analytical skills and the ability to readily assimilate elements of information regarding unfamiliar subjects. They must be able to make judgments on the quality of information provided through diverse mediums, and make good decisions in areas not within their area of expertise. They must value and effectively use information as a leadership tool to gain alignment and empower others to achieve organizational goals.
- f. **ORGANIZATION CONTEXT:** Selectees must have a demonstrated understanding of how the Coast Guard fits into the broader structure of the Department, Executive Branch, federal government, nation, and international community. Selectees must be able to identify the internal and external relationships that affect the Coast Guard and the Department, approaching each situation with a clear perception of external reality, and recognizing the potential impact of Coast Guard courses of action.