



FEMA

April 25, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: W. Craig Fugate
Administrator

THROUGH: Ernest Mitchell //signed//
U.S. Fire Administrator

THROUGH: Denis Onieal //signed//
Superintendent, National Fire Academy

FROM: Adam Thiel //signed//
Chairman, Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy

SUBJECT: Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
Report for 2012 and 2013

As required by the Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy (BOV NFA) Charter, please find attached a report for 2012 and 2013.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the Board, in its review:

- a. Examined Academy programs to determine whether they further the basic mission approved by the Administrator of FEMA.
- b. Examined the physical plant of the Academy to determine the adequacy of the facilities.
- c. Examined funding levels for the Academy programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

cc:
BOV NFA Members

Fiscal Year 2012 and 2013 Meeting Schedule

October 14-15, 2011
February 21, 2012
April 25-26, 2012
July 26, 2012
December 5, 2012
May 15, 2013

The U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) Board of Visitors (BOV) for the National Fire Academy (NFA) reviewed the Academy in three areas of responsibility and submits the following report for 2012/2013.

“An examination of Academy programs to determine whether these programs further the basic missions which are approved by the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The NFA continues to be a mission-critical organizational unit within Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA in supporting FEMA's mission to support citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards. The NFA serves the whole community and has a proven track record of performance in fulfilling this mission.

The traditional role of NFA has expanded over the years in response to changing DHS/FEMA priorities and legislation. The continued integration of emergency medical services (EMS) curriculum in existing courses, and the development of new EMS courses and programs, remains an area of focus. Other courses have been developed and updated to address new challenges in the interest of ensuring the uniformity of the course content being delivered by DHS/FEMA to all emergency responders; examples include the training courses developed and implemented with the National Wildland Coordinating Group and NFA Online through the addition of instructor-based, mediated learning.

The NFA continues to play a vital role in working with stakeholder groups and soliciting their input with respect to course development and delivery. This single point of contact with numerous organizational stakeholders has

improved customer service with respect to the new challenges faced by these stakeholders.

As with any other academic institution, and despite budget constraints reducing the number of on-campus visits/meetings from two per year to one per year, the BOV serves as the conduit for the receipt of official stakeholder input. NFA stakeholders include not only the staff, faculty, and students, but also the federal/state/local/tribal agencies and organizations that rely on the NFA for critical support in the face of continued threats to our Nation from natural and technological disasters, both accidental and intentional.

To facilitate this process, the BOV convened the following subcommittees in 2012/2013:

- ***Professional Development***

The Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) initiative experienced continued success in 2012/2013. The 2012 FESHE Conference was held on the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) campus with more than 200 people in attendance. The 2013 Conference was cancelled due to DHS-wide conference restrictions. The FESHE Recognition and Certification Program has been implemented in 25 states representing 49 bachelor and associate degree programs. FESHE has attracted the interest of numerous states and large municipal fire departments through synergy with the Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE) program. Web-enabled meetings between FESHE and TRADE leadership, along with academic institutions in each region, are being conducted quarterly. As a result of this collaboration, and the continuing work of the Professional Development subcommittee, the BOV recommended a new business model for a USFA Professional Development Initiative. This initiative will promote professional development through USFA's three major networks—TRADE (training), Prevention Advocacy Resources and Data Exchange (PARADE/prevention), and FESHE (higher education). The first unified Professional Development Initiative Conference is planned for June 2014.

- ***Applicant Outreach***

A BOV subcommittee was established to explore ways of enhancing outreach to potential NFA applicants, particularly those from underrepresented groups. A broad stakeholder group was formed from

organizations that represent diversity in fire and emergency services. The group received voluminous data and reports on program activities, and several legal opinions from the FEMA Office of Chief Counsel. Twelve recommendations to assist the national fire service in facilitating applicant outreach were developed and included in the Applicant Outreach subcommittee report, accepted by the BOV at its April 25-26, 2012, meeting. They were:

1. bilingual classes and materials;
2. use of national fire service organizations for applicant recruitment;
3. additional emails announcing class vacancies;
4. newsletters (reoccurring advertisement or reminder);
5. mass emails/mailings to groups, councils, entities;
6. recruiting booths at conferences (NFA “recruiting road show”);
7. magazine articles;
8. presentations on application filing and processes;
9. invite a diverse pool of individuals to the NFA for a “cultural awareness weekend”
10. use of national, state, and local organizations for application and recruitment;
11. promote local and state level mentoring to assist in the application process; and
12. International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) to identify fire chief “champions” who would enhance attendance at the NFA by women and minority applicants.

Nine of the twelve recommendations have been fully implemented by the NFA. Two others--a diversity conference and bilingual curriculum development--require significant additional funding for full implementation. The final recommendation is within the purview of the IAFC Human Relations Committee.

▪ ***Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) Admissions Criteria Review Subcommittee***

At the request of U.S. Fire Administrator Ernest Mitchell, on April 25, 2012, the BOV empaneled a subcommittee to review the academic accreditation requirements for EFOP admission. In a September 12, 2012, memorandum the BOV Chair recommended the acceptance of degrees from both nationally and regionally accredited colleges and universities in accordance

with Department of Education guidelines to begin in June 2013. Beginning June 2014 the BOV recommended a two-tier admissions process based on an evaluation of the transcript of the applicant. The transcript evaluation will be based on the number of classroom hours, the amount of transfer credit, and the amount of credit for life experience. Tier 1 candidates will have in excess of 60 classroom hours, and no more than 30 credits from credit by examination and no more than 30 credits for life experience (including credit for non-academic certificate courses and/or professional certifications).

NFA Overview

Only 6 percent of NFA students attend a resident class; the remaining 94 percent of students attend classes locally or through NFA Online.

Resident classes are reserved for those requiring: high level discussion/interaction; specialized simulation or modeling capabilities; close supervision and counsel; or the introduction of new subject areas. NFA continues to leverage its resources through delivery of regional and state courses and a growing number of distance education course offerings through the Internet. NFA Online continues to be the NFA's fastest growing training program with more than 37,000 completions in FY13.

The NFA staff continues to pursue new applications for technology in course delivery, administration, and information dissemination. The NFA enhanced its automated course call process to provide State Fire Training Agencies with a more manageable window to forecast their training needs and provide more course options. This new program automates the scheduling and provides NFA staff with the tools to manage their course load demand.

The NFA introduced the Bring Your Own Device downloadable student manuals in many of its FY2013 resident classes. The pilot tests were extremely successful with a high rate of participation and student appreciation. Continued testing and implementation is scheduled through FY2016.

The NFA developed a new materials download feature to give State Fire Training Agencies direct access to NFA 2- and 6-day course materials. This provides each state with real time, up-to-date access to NFA course material.

The BOV supports the NFA's use of technology to expand its reach and believes continued progress in this area will be essential to address future challenges and opportunities. In education, however, one size does not fit all. There are appropriate uses for online training, off-campus classroom based training, and resident training. The NFA takes great effort to assure that finite resources are used effectively and efficiently by carefully assessing the student population, desired outcomes, and performance evaluation before a delivery method is chosen. Only 6 percent of the students who took NFA courses in FY2013 actually attended a course on campus. The remaining 94 percent took courses in classrooms at the state and local level, and online.

The EFOP continues to play a crucial role in the preparation of the next generation of fire and emergency services leaders. The 25th Annual EFOP Symposium was held September 6-8, 2013, and included 220 participants, the largest number in the program's history. The use of online tools for EFOP pre-course activities is still expanding. Demand continues to exceed capacity and available resources for this signature program.

Building on the successful EFOP model, the BOV recommended the development of a new Managing Officer Program to serve mid-level managers in fire and emergency services organizations, including EMS. The first cohort will assemble on campus in FY2015. Two subcommittees were formed to recommend admissions policies and curriculum content. Those subcommittees will provide their recommendations to the U.S. Fire Administrator by March 30, 2014.

The NFA Internship Program continued bringing participants from colleges and universities to the NETC campus. The BOV believes this program is extremely useful for developing citizens' knowledge about the fire and emergency services, with added potential to attract future leaders from the whole community.

The NFA still awards Continuing Education Units credit for all NFA courses through the International Association of Continuing Education and Training. This remains beneficial to a growing number of NFA students who are required to meet continuing education requirements for certification.

The American Council on Education (ACE) conducted its annual review of 30 NFA courses (21 existing and 9 new). The ACE reviewers examined 30 courses (21 existing classes, 9 new classes). Twenty-eight courses were

recommended for credit without conditions. One course is no longer being offered because the material has become outdated; the other, a 2-hour online course, did not provide sufficient content to warrant credit recommendation, but will be continued to be offered because the material is of value to the fire service community. The ACE review process provides an independent and objective third-party assessment of the NFA’s program quality, as well as a tangible benefit for students who can use the credits to pursue higher education through other academic institutions.

NFA continued a systematic study of resident courses with students and their supervisors to determine long-term training effectiveness. During FY2013, 486 students and 378 supervisors responded. As with previous years’ responses, students indicated they were able to transfer the training skills and learning to their jobs, and supervisors reported improved performance as follows:

Long-Term Evaluation Reporting Elements	2012	2013
Students reporting they were able to apply NFA training at home	95.5%	97.2%
Students reporting NFA training improved their job performance	97.1%	96.7%
Students reporting they shared NFA training with their peers	96.9%	98.3%
Students reporting they conducted formal courses with NFA material	24.6%	34.9%
Students reporting they established new policies and procedures based on NFA training	65.6%	74.9%
Supervisors reporting improved performance from NFA training	88.6%	89.6%
Supervisors reporting improved departmental performance	88.8%	89.4%
Supervisors who say they will recommend NFA training to others	97.0%	97.3%
Supervisors reporting NFA benefits outweigh costs	92.1%	93.9%

Note: Data reported was derived from NFA Long-Term Evaluation Forms sent to both students and their supervisors 4–6 months after the NFA training class ended.

“An examination of the physical plant of the Academy to determine the adequacy of the Academy facilities.”

The size, age, and scope of the NETC campus facility continues to offer many challenges. On behalf of students and other stakeholders, the BOV appreciates the tremendous support FEMA has provided to address capital improvement and maintenance issues on campus. While much progress has been made, particularly relating to Americans with Disability Act compliance and energy efficiency, deferred maintenance continues to be a crucial issue. Currently, there remains about \$12 million in deferred

maintenance. The BOV recommends that FEMA establish an annual \$5 million deferred maintenance budget as suggested by the Office of Management and Budget. The BOV commends FEMA and NETC staff in their ongoing efforts to upgrade and maintain the physical infrastructure.

While campus facilities including the Learning Resource Center and the Publications office continue providing essential support for the work of the NFA, there remains a long documented need to expand the NETC facilities to accommodate the addition of 300 students per class cycle. This will require additional classroom, lodging and support space and will be vital to NFA continuing to fully support the broader DHS/FEMA mission.

Enhancements in technology are providing instructors with the necessary tools to use contemporary adult learning principles and practices. Computer support for students has been provided in the form of a student computer lab with Internet access and Wi-Fi connections in dormitory rooms. Efforts to provide broader wireless computer access continue to receive a positive response from students and visitors. Appropriate funding will be needed to ensure the adequacy of the campus information technology infrastructure to support the growing number of courses that are delivered online.

“An examination of the funding levels for Academy programs”

The USFA and NFA continue to demonstrate commendable stewardship with respect to the limited resources they are allocated, particularly in these tight fiscal times.

Still, by providing the critical foundation for our Nation’s fire and emergency services providers, it remains imperative that NFA receive necessary funding in accordance with its mission and the expected role it plays within DHS/FEMA.

NFA may be unique in the federal government because its specific mission is to train state and local first responders and their leaders, not federal employees. NFA resident courses are those most closely related to the DHS/FEMA mission: community risk reduction; National Incident Management System (NIMS) and large regional response to emergencies; and executive leadership / management skills necessary to implement community based preparedness, mitigation and response efforts.

While there is a cost to both on- and off-campus training, it's important to recognize that every emergency, every disaster starts locally. To the extent that a community has a well-trained, well-lead cadre of first responders, that emergency stays local. If it is poorly handled, or if it is so large that the local forces are overwhelmed, it may trigger a state and federal response. It is in the interest of both DHS and FEMA to try to keep local emergencies local; there were 23,000,000 local emergencies reported last year and only 75 Presidential-declared disasters.

In the case where the local forces are overwhelmed, it is important that the local forces integrate with outside help – state and federal – using the NIMS and the Incident Command System. That's what the NFA trains local first responders to do. A reduction in resident classes at the NFA will result in a degradation of incident management capabilities, community risk reduction, hazardous materials response, and arson detection and prosecution.

While training may have a cost, the lack of training is even more expensive. As of December 2013, 98 firefighters died in the line of duty. While there is no scientific proof that the deaths were caused by lack of training, initial reports seem to suggest that some of them were. Above all else, the National Fire Academy was created to prevent those tragedies.

In closing, throughout 2012/2013, visionary leadership was provided by the U.S. Fire Administrator Ernest Mitchell and Deputy Fire Administrator Glenn Gaines. They both have created the environment in which the United States Fire Administration thrives. The dedicated and passionate staff and leadership of NFA and the other USFA units support this work. Superintendent Denis Onieal, Deputy Superintendents Kirby Kiefer and Robert Neale lead this talented staff. Former Management, Operations and Support Services Director Ron Face, Current Director Al Fluman, and their staff deserve much credit for the NETC facility.

Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Board of Visitors

Sandy Bogucki – Member 2012

Associate Professor, Section of Emergency Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

Kwame Cooper – Member 2012/2013

Assistant Chief
Los Angeles City Fire Department
Los Angeles, California

Robert Cumberland – Member 2012/2013

Maryland Director
Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association
Westminster, Maryland

Manuel Fonseca – Member 2012/2013

Assistant Chief
Nashville Fire Department
Nashville, Tennessee

Helen Johnson, Chair 2012

Executive Director (Retired)
State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas
Austin, Texas

Chris Neal – Member 2012/2013

Senior Executive Advisor
Oklahoma Council on Firefighter Training
Edmond, Oklahoma

Randal Novak – Member 2012/2013

Bureau Chief
Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau
Ames, Iowa

Jack Reall – Member 2012/2013

Captain
President, Columbus Firefighters Union, IAFF 67
Columbus, Ohio

Adam K. Thiel – Chair 2013/Member 2012

Fire Chief
Alexandria Fire Department
Alexandria, Virginia

Steven Westermann

Chief
Central Jackson County Fire Protection District
Blue Springs, Missouri