

July 23, 2025

To: Scott Duncan
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
The Pentagon
Washington, DC

Dear Scott,

Pursuant to the Secretary of Defense directive that the services eliminate "any program, element, or initiative that was established to promote divisive concepts"—which he has rightly described as contrary to the Department of Defense's "core mission of providing the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security"—I write to affirm the Department of the Navy's commitment to restore America's fighting force and the warrior ethos. In alignment with your guidance, our focus will remain on "lethality, meritocracy, accountability, standards, and readiness" all within a culture that rewards excellence. We will remove corrosive DEI programs, and instead promote fitness standards, maritime skills and marksmanship as essential component of the warrior ethos. Moreover, we will assess the fact that USNA's DEI Office appears to still be open, albeit renamed as the Office of Engagement, Retention and Equal Opportunity. (<https://www.usna.edu/Engagement>).

To propose targeted reforms to the U.S. Naval Academy's (USNA) structure, faculty, admissions, and curriculum to better prepare future naval and Marine Corps warfighting leaders. These recommendations address imbalances in civilian-dominated governance that weaken the Academy's military mission.

Accordingly, I am directing the establishment of a **Naval Higher Education Review Board** in order to: (1) identify any material or practice incompatible with the core mission and warrior ethos; (2) remove materials and practices deemed inappropriate for today's warfighter progression; (3) confirm through a deliberate review; and (4) determine new trajectory as required to continue the vision of the President of the United States of America, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Navy. This board will:

- 1) Reinstate and encourage a culture of discipline as a part of the warrior ethos.
- 2) Review curriculum and academics, confirming that all content aligns with DoD priorities.
- 3) Review faculty and staff composition and expertise of personnel.
- 4) Assess and appoint if needed a new Dean with an O-6 Permanent Military Professor (PMP) for a 5-6 year term. Both West Point and Air Force have an O-6 Director of Admissions.
- 5) Assess the selection criteria, process and composition of committees. By: Expanding the number of PMPs from **40 to at least 100**, ensuring military leadership at every level of academic and institutional oversight. Appoint PMPs to serve as **heads of academic schools** (Engineering, Math/Science, Humanities, Leadership), **chairs of all 16 departments**, the **Dean of Admissions**, **Deputy Superintendent**, and **Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen**.

- 6) Increase leadership exposure and inspiration for midshipmen and officer candidates.
- 7) Remove materials and practices deemed inappropriate for today's warfighter progression.

A particular emphasis will be applied on the Humanities and Social Sciences, including History and English. Faculty recruitment and selection processes will be reviewed to ensure merit-based selection that leads to preparing our future officers for leading in Peace Through Strength and then success in combat when the Nation calls. Divest from the civilian university modeling emphasis in order to remain the premier service academy in service to the Nation. Additionally, we will ensure merit-based scholarship opportunities compliment the warrior ethos and sharpen the skills of warfare specialties.

To drive this effort, a **Naval Higher Education Review Board** will be established. There will be a phased approach for assessment, realignment, and optimization. Phase 1 will last 0-3 months and will focus on establishing the Task Force, admissions review, and audit of faculty ratio. Phase 2 will last 3-6 months and will focus on an ethos training overhaul, Warfighter Lecture Series, and update to admissions rubric as required. Phase 3 will last 6-12+ months completing the faculty rebalance, core curriculum revision, and an evaluation of metrics towards success. The curriculum review will be a stepped approach of preparation, work, decision, and implementation.

The **Naval Higher Education Review Board** will be made up of prominent leaders in both the public and private sector who are committed to restoring the warrior ethos and bringing meritocracy and accountability back to Naval education. Within 30 days, provide me with a list of recommendations for my review who you believe will be appropriate and qualified to serve on this board.

This board will remain engaged over the 2025-2026 academic year and beyond to help facilitate the requirements directed by the Secretary of the Navy as implemented by the Naval War College President, the Naval Post Graduate School President, and the Naval Academy Superintendent. The work of the Task Force is an enabler for our warfighters, a compliment to the faculty and instructors, supports the core warfighting mission, and sustains warrior ethos through education and training. Our Officers must be educated and transformed to accept the mantle of leadership from those who have successfully gone before them. Our Sailors and Marines deserve leaders prepared to fight and win the Nation's wars while upholding Peace Through Strength. Our Nation deserves the very best in leadership and the Navy will deliver it.

Very Respectfully,

The Honorable John C. Phelan
Secretary of the Navy
The Pentagon
Washington, DC