

# Summer Update from the Superintendent

Vice Admiral  
**Sean S. Buck**

## UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

On a recent hot, muggy July day on the Yard, I observed companies of plebes marching to and from plebe summer evolutions, midshipmen attending summer school classes in person and eating together in King Hall, and local Annapolitans exercising and enjoying our dining establishments on the Yard. While historically this might seem like any normal summer day in Annapolis, the “normalness” of it all is a stark reminder of how far we’ve come.

The past 17 months were a profound challenge to navigate here on the Yard for everyone who lived and worked within these walls. Our leadership team had to make decisions on constantly evolving and emerging information, often on short notice. The midshipmen, faculty, and staff had to respond to and live with those decisions — some of which they may not have agreed with. When I look back on the past year and a half, I am struck by a deepened respect for and appreciation of our team here in Annapolis. The pandemic reconfirmed, beyond any measure of a doubt, that our faculty and staff here are deeply committed to our mission and our midshipmen.

The pandemic also provided an opportunity to forge deeper bonds with our local community outside our walls, [which I wrote about in the Capital Gazette earlier this month](#). From our partnership with St. John’s College to lease dormitory space, to the local families who housed 190 midshipmen during spring semester, to the local hotels that helped quarantine midshipmen, to our many sponsor families that provided midshipmen respite during their limited liberty, to our local elected officials who worked with us to accomplish our mission from Navy athletics to Commissioning Week, we worked hand in hand with our community surrounding the gates.

I realize that not everyone agreed 100% with the decisions made over the last year and a half regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. There is certainly a list of “pandemic lessons learned” that I pray future Superintendents never need to refer to in the coming years. But, all in all, I am incredibly proud of the way our team handled the pandemic and want to share a few of the successes of our team:

- Our academic faculty rapidly moved our entire curriculum from in-person to online instruction in under a week during the spring semester of 2020. They then adjusted to facilitating

hybrid in-person and online instruction during academic year 2021, adopting new technologies and pedagogical techniques to maintain a high standard of instruction across our academic disciplines.

- We kept the accessions machine running and commissioned the Classes of 2020 and 2021 and inducted the Classes of 2024 and 2025 during the pandemic.
- Our admissions team worked through an incredibly challenging year, bringing in a talented class from all 50 states, our U.S. territories, and 13 different countries. The Class of 2025 is the most diverse class in USNA history and has the second highest percentage of women.
- Our student athletes and coaches demonstrated incredible dedication and perseverance through very challenging and unpredictable athletic seasons; collectively, our Varsity teams brought home our eighth Army-Navy Star Series title in the past nine years and our seventh consecutive Patriot League Presidents’ Cup.
- Our medical team worked tirelessly to keep us safe on the Yard. From weekly surveillance testing, to patient care, to our mass vaccination exercise this spring, our Navy medical

“We kept the accessions machine running and commissioned the Classes of 2020 and 2021 and inducted the Classes of 2024 and 2025 during the pandemic.”





team guided us through the pandemic safely. Through the herculean efforts of our medical team, we conducted over 1,000 vaccinations per week throughout most of the spring; we were able to immunize nearly 99% of the brigade and the vast majority of our faculty and staff ahead of Commissioning Week and summer training.

Our huge success in getting a significant portion of our team here on the Yard vaccinated opened up the doors to life returning to normal on the Yard and allowed us to safely execute a “close to normal” Commissioning Week for Class of 2021. Over the course of the week we enjoyed the annual Blue Angels performance, Color Parade, awards ceremonies, garden receptions, and held our graduation ceremony in front of 9,000 family members and friends at Navy and Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.



The vaccine also opened the doors to summer training once again and we are using this summer to mitigate the impacts of lost training last summer. More than 1,600 of our midshipmen are on Navy ships and attached to Navy units around the country currently getting valuable exposure to the Fleet and its different service communities. We also resumed PROTRAMID training this summer; over 1,100 third-class midshipmen are participating in the four week long training program on the East and West coasts. And, 922 midshipmen have chosen to spend their summer learning more about the U.S. Marine Corps, participating in Marine specific training such as Leatherneck, MAGTF Cruises, and Marine Corps training schools.

We also have midshipmen participating in training on the Yard to include Yard Patrol cruises, Offshore Sailing Training Squadron, and Powered Flight Program. We have 220 midshipmen who are learning valuable leadership skills in the great outdoors through programs such as National Outdoor Leadership School and Northern Tier. Additionally, 427 midshipmen are interning at agencies and laboratories around the country.

Despite travel restrictions, and thanks to the diligent work of our International Programs Office, 150 of our midshipmen are abroad in 12 different countries this summer learning foreign languages and experiencing new cultures.



Midshipmen visit Iceland to experience culture, nature, and renewable energy on a ten-day excursion.



Midshipmen visit the Egyptian Naval College







**And, Plebe Summer for Class of 2025 is fully underway here in Annapolis.** Due to the high number of incoming plebes that showed up fully-vaccinated or partially vaccinated, we were able to plan a very normal Plebe Summer. We hit the ground running right after Induction Day this year; it's wonderful to see the plebes conducting PEP, running the E-Course and O-Course, learning damage control, shooting pistols and rifles, sailing Colgate-26s, and eating at squad tables as a regiment in King Hall.

Our midshipmen are also standing out for their selfless and quick-thinking actions on and off duty which resulted in two lives being saved this summer:

- Midn Jack Sherman and his dad rescued a boater in the water 40 miles off the coast of North Carolina. An account of the rescue can be found [here](#).
- Several of our midshipmen and an enlisted staff member saved the life of a motorcyclist who was trapped under a vehicle following a collision on a freeway in San Diego, California. Midn Dagen Franks, Midn Mariah Johnson, Midn Calvin Jensen, and SSGT Esparza Garcia (26th Company SEL), with the help of several other midshipmen on PROTRAMID, lifted the vehicle off the trapped motorcyclist and rendered first aid while waiting for emergency services to arrive

Last but not least, I am beyond grateful for the overwhelming response by our Naval Academy and Annapolis community to the Cummings family following the tragic death of Mrs. Cummings in Annapolis on Induction Day. Naval Academy alumni from around the country reached out to see how they could be of service to the Cummings family during this time of tragedy and showed once again what the Naval Academy family is all about.

I'd like to close out my update by inviting you all to return to Annapolis and to the Yard. As of July 2nd, we're open to the general public once again for visiting to include Yard and Museum tours, religious services, recreation, dining, and shopping. We will continue to monitor COVID rates in our local area as they evolve and update our base access posture based on DoD guidance. Please visit [www.usna.edu](http://www.usna.edu) to find up-to-date information regarding our current Health Protection Condition, Yard access, and hours of operation for our museum, stores, and dining options.

**We'd love to see you in the near future enjoying the Naval Academy with your loved ones—we've missed you in Annapolis!**

