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Kirk A. Davis Commander
United States Coast Guard Academy

Cassandra Y. Johnson Lieutenant
United States Coast Guard Academy

Darell Singleterry Lieutenant
United States Coast Guard Academy

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Minority Buoyancy in the Sea of Elitism

Commander Kirk A. Davis

United States Coast Guard Academy

Lieutenant Cassandra Y. Johnson

United States Coast Guard Academy

Lieutenant Darell Singleterry

United States Coast Guard Academy

“Although the ‘Ivory Towers’ provide very effective officers to the services, we are living in an extreme falsehood if we believe that despite their lack of diversity they are graduating the best our nation has to offer.”

On Jan. 6, 1995, Secretary of Defense William J. Perry released a message addressing the importance of the nation's service academies. The excerpt below is the first paragraph of that message:

"For generations, Americans have looked up to the military officers who wear an academy ring for a very simple reason: In leadership, service, and personal example, they command respect. Service academy graduates represent the best our nation has to offer. They arrive at the academies as some of the nation's best high school scholars, athletes, and leaders; they depart to lead the world's best military officer corps."

Most Americans do not argue the point that the service academies provide an excellent education in academics and character development. The question is, how can the academies enroll and graduate the best the nation has to offer when the cadet corps or institutional staff do not reflect the demographic flavor (ethnic/gender) that makes our nation great? Although the "Ivory Towers" provide very effective officers to the services, we are living in an extreme falsehood if we believe that despite their lack of diversity they are graduating the best our nation has to offer.

The United States Coast Guard Academy, located in New London, Conn., has recognized this institutional flaw and is implementing/pursuing major projects to truly commission the best military officers the nation has to offer.

Topics

Program Initiatives

- The Minority Introduction to Engineering (MITE) program hosts high school students between their junior and senior years to spend one week at the academy. The program emphasis is to acquaint the students to engineering and cadet life. Since the program's inception, USCGA has used this as a recruiting tool for minority students, as well as accomplishing the engineering goals set forth by ABET. Historically, approximately 30 percent of the MITE students are awarded appointments to USCGA or NAPS; of those, 55 percent accept the appointments.
- The Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) is a 10-month, educationally intense program located in Newport, RI. The goal of this program is to prepare

students academically, physically, and militarily for the rigors of academy life. Successfully completing the NAPS program ensures the student an appointment to the Coast Guard Academy. . The Coast Guard Recruiting Initiative for the 21st Century (CGRIT) program provides scholarships to outstanding minorities attending HBCU/MIs or other approved institutions with significant minority populations. The objective of the recruitment program is to produce a pool of academy candidates that will accurately reflect the diversity and talents of American society. The Coast Guard pays for tuition, books, and room and board in addition to issuing a monthly allowance to the student.

Admissions Emphasis

- To meet the academy's program, diversity, and quality objectives and to compete successfully against other prestigious colleges and universities, we restructured internally and implemented a wider-based recruiting strategy. Better utilizing our recruiting network (alumni, parents, and friends) resulted in more student contact, more high school visits, attendance at more college fairs, and more applications for the Class of 2001. Concurrent with building a network we developed new, informative marketing pieces. This new literature includes a campus video, brochures specifically directed at minority candidates, and a World Wide Web site. In addition, a CD-ROM will be ready for distribution by this summer. Despite our increasing use of new technology, we still rely heavily on student searches, direct mailings, and personal contact to "close the deal."

Institutional Emphasis

- The Human Relations Program is designed to empower cadets to promote a climate where all people are treated fairly with respect, dignity, compassion, and most importantly, are provided the opportunity to work, develop, and achieve his or her potential. The academic objectives of the program are achieved through more than 48 hours of formalized training during the four-year development process. Key elements of the program are role playing, historical reflections, and reflective time for the students. Other programs that help the program are the cadet family sponsor program, the intensive academic support program, alumni visits/involvement, and cadet-organized internal committees.

PRESENTERS

Commander Kirk A. Davis has been the Associate Director of Admissions at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy since June 1996. A native of Syracuse, N.Y., Davis graduated from secondary school in Titusville, Fla., in 1971. He is a graduate of Brevard Community College with an A.A. in business administration, a 1975 graduate of the University of South Florida with a B.A. in social and behavioral sciences, a 1976 graduate of the Coast Guard Officer Candidate School in Yorktown, Va., a 1983 graduate of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Course at Patrick Air Force Base, Fla., and a 1987 graduate of George Washington University with a master's degree in education and human resource development.

During his 22 years in the Coast Guard, Davis has served in the Twelfth Coast Guard

District Search and Rescue Branch and as the Special Liaison to the Department of Transportation (DOT) Region Nine representative in San Francisco; Deputy Group Commander of Group Duluth, Minn.; Assistant Chief, Military Equal Opportunity Division in the Office of Civil Rights, Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, N.C.; and Chief, Summer Training Section, within the Commandant of Cadets and Professional Development departments at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Other assignments included Assistant Chief, Readiness Branch and Assistant Civil Rights Officer for the Seventh Coast Guard District in Miami, Fla.; and Chief, Physical Disability Evaluation System Branch at the U.S. Coast Guard Personnel Command in Washington, N.C. Davis is a graduate of the Harvard Admissions Institute and is a member of the National Naval Officers Association.

Lieutenant Cassandra Y. Johnson is the Military Civil Rights Counselor, Facilitator, and Leadership Instructor at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Her responsibilities include training all personnel including officers, enlisted corps, civilians, and cadets in military civil rights and human relations. She also counsels individuals on a variety of issues related to the human relations area, advises the internal human relations network organized by cadets, and networks with the community and local colleges to help develop/facilitate training for the cadets. A native of St. Louis, Mo., Johnson graduated from Central Missouri State University in 1986 with a B.S. in political science. After graduating from the U.S. Coast Guard Officer Candidate School, Yorktown, Va., Johnson began her Coast Guard career at the Fifth Coast Guard District, Norfolk, Va., as Assistant Section Chief, Reserve Programs. In 1984, she was assigned to the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, Hampton Roads, Va.

Lieutenant Darell Singleterry is entering his seventh year of service with the United States Coast Guard. He entered the service's enlisted corps through the Coast Guard's Minority Officer Recruiting Effort (M.O.R.E.) program while a sophomore in college. In 1992, he graduated cum laude with a B.S. in education from Delaware State University. He received his officer's commission in the U.S. Coast Guard from Officer Candidate School in Yorktown, Va., the following fall.

Singleterry was assigned aboard USCG Forward (WMEC 911) as a Deck Watch Officer and First Lieutenant (Deck Department Head). As a Department Head at age 23, Singleterry supervised 20 enlisted crew members and was responsible for the safe execution of all deck evolutions. During his two-year tour, he contributed to the interdiction and repatriation of more than 700 Haitian and 237 Chinese immigrants, provided key intelligence information in testimony to the federal prosecution of a maritime smuggling venture of 2,500 kilos of cocaine, and enforced complex fisheries and marine living resources regulations in the northwest Atlantic.

Singleterry is completing his third year as Director of Recruiting Activities, Inland States, for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He is responsible for the national recruitment and selection of bright young men and women to become the nation's future military leaders through one of the toughest selection processes in the country. This summer, he will transfer to a Coast Guard-funded graduate school program and will return to the academy

in 1999 as an instructor in the Management and Leadership Department.