



U. S. Coast Guard Academy
Guidelines for Admissions Interviewers

OCTOBER 2017

Prepared with grateful appreciation to the
Yale Office of Undergraduate Admissions

Dear Academy Admissions Partner,

The Admissions Division appreciates your willingness to devote time to interviewing applicants for admission. You are one of over 850 Partners nationwide who represent the Academy and conduct evaluative interviews for the Superintendent. For many prospective cadets, their contact with a local representative may be their only contact with the Academy. Your enthusiasm and regard for the Academy may make the difference between a student choosing to attend the Academy or deciding to attend college elsewhere.

These interview guidelines should be read carefully because they provide important information on the admissions and interview process. Using the information available on our internet site, www.uscga.edu, and the Partners portal, as well as these guidelines should allow you to answer questions from prospective students. Additionally, please be familiar with the view book and marketing literature mailed to you.

Since we communicate frequently by email, please let me know if your email address changes. In addition, it would be helpful if you add my email address to your list so it is not blocked. For general admissions questions please don't hesitate to call the Admissions Office or your Admissions Officer at 800.883.8724.

Despite the fact that only one in five applicants are admitted, Partners find their work very rewarding. Interviews are an opportunity to meet committed, hard working and accomplished students in your community, and help them navigate the college search process whether or not they end up at the Academy.

Thank you for volunteering to assist in the admissions effort. If I can be of assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Alex Eames '09
Associate Director for Volunteer Programs
Alexander.G.Eames@uscga.edu
860.701.6385

CALENDAR

The busiest time for interviews is generally October through February. The calendar below will give you a better idea of the relationship between interviews and the admission cycle:

Aug 4	Application opens
September – early November	Admissions Officers travel nationwide. Interviews underway
15 October	Early Action deadline
October – mid December	Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board meets to review Early Action applications
17 November	Deadline for Early Action I interview reports to arrive at the Admissions Office
24 December	Early Action I decisions completed
15 January	Application deadline for regular decision
15 January – 1 April	Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board meets
27 Feb	Deadline for regular decision interview reports to arrive at the Admissions Office. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit. The sooner the reports are received, the more likely they will be considered by the Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board
1 April	Appointment decisions
January – June	New Cadet Orientation held in New London for admitted students. Local welcome aboard events hosted by Partners and Parents Association
1 May	National accept/decline appointment reply by date
June- August	AIM, International Orientation, CGA Scholars Orientation convene. Admissions Officers train and plan fall travel

THE INTERVIEW

Policy

Although we would like to interview every applicant for admission, we do not have enough interviewers to do so at this time. Therefore, the interview is an optional requirement. The Admissions Office will request to interview a student based on a review of their record, or special interest factors. Partners are welcome and encouraged to interview any prospective applicant they meet locally, with or without an Admissions request, if interviewing is mutually acceptable.

Purpose

The interview serves two related purposes: to provide information and evaluate the applicant.

An interview can improve our understanding of an applicant's character and personal strengths (ability to persevere, intellectual motivation, follow through, ingenuity, self-awareness). Some attributes like sense of humor, respect for authority, or sensitivity to others are best conveyed in person. The interview is an opportunity for us to gain a more complete picture of each applicant, and for the applicant to establish a personal relationship with the Academy. In some cases, the interview may shed light on personal qualities that make the candidate unsuitable for admission.

As you know, the cadet experience is rigorous. The interview can also improve an applicant's awareness of the commitment required to graduate and serve as a commissioned officer in the Coast Guard. The interview is an opportunity for applicants to more completely understand aspects of the education that are unique - the Honor Concept, cadet conduct system, physical fitness requirements, and the leadership development program. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate how Academy programs can enable a student to reach academic, athletic, professional and social goals through college and beyond.

In our search for character and talent, we do not look for a single "type" of student. Those you interview will differ in background, dress, interests – and from you.

Likewise, there is no single interview format or prescribed set of questions for this interview. However, using the guidelines below, we believe you will create an approach that works well for you and accommodates the individual differences of the applicants you interview.

The written summary of the interview is included in the applicant's record. It allows the Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board (CCEB) to gain insight into a student's character and interests, and whether or not the Academy is a good "fit."

Discussion

Prior to 2003, the admissions interview was used primarily as an evaluation, and second as an opportunity for applicants to learn more about the Academy. For the past few years, the admissions interview was more informational, during which facts learned from the internet were translated into personal "benefits" and "value."

A successful interview for this admissions cycle will:

- Give students a realistic picture of what life at the Academy is like
- Provide an evaluation to the members of the CCEB reviewing the applicant's file
- Create value in the lives of students
- Establish a positive feeling about their prospects at the Academy

Scheduling the Interview

When you are assigned an interview, please make contact promptly. Applicants will normally be told to expect a call two weeks after they've requested an interview. If they do not hear from you they will be instructed to call the Admissions Office. An early phone call from you is an expression of hospitality and interest. Delay can be seen as lack of interest.

Although some Partners find half an hour to three quarters long enough to interview, we recommend you set aside an hour just in case.

Any professional or public setting such as a library, school counselor's office, Coast Guard base, or public meeting space is acceptable as long as it is accessible, convenient, and safe. The student's home is acceptable *only* if a parent is present. The chosen setting should allow the applicant to feel at ease and speak freely. Quiet, mutual comfort, ease of access, and freedom from interruption are important. When scheduling time and location, think like a parent and be concerned for the student's safety and security.

- **DON'T** offer to pick up and drive him/her to an interview unaccompanied
- **DON'T** meet after hours in an unoccupied or dark building or office complex
- **DON'T** meet in your home or the student's home without parents present
- **DON'T** schedule multiple interviews at the same time. No one appreciates waiting.

Calling the Student

- Introduce yourself as an Academy Admissions Partner and let the student know that you would like to schedule a time and place for the admissions interview. If possible give the student more than one choice in time as well as location. Please indicate how long the interview will take (usually 45 minutes).
- Schedule the interview outside of school hours. Late afternoons, early evenings, and weekends work best. Please don't ask a student to skip a class to make the interview.
- If the student tells you that she/he already has had an on-campus interview, please leave it up to the student to interview with you again. If the student declines, please let her/him know they may contact you with any general questions about the Academy.
- If meeting in a public place like a library or coffee shop, please let the student know how to identify you.
- Please discourage students from bringing resumes or parts of their application to the interview. The Admissions Office would like you to evaluate how the student handles the interview, not how strong the resume is (we already have this information).
- Let the student know the interview does not include parents. We encourage you to greet parents that arrive with their child, suggest a waiting place for them, and thank and compliment them after the interview.

- Please conclude the call by acknowledging you look forward to the meeting. Leave your telephone number and email address in case the applicant needs to contact you prior.

How to Prepare For the Interview

Aside from reviewing these guidelines, we suggest verifying your travel route to the meeting site, and packing a pen and notebook in case you jot some notes. Additionally, if you own a photo album or year book related to your Academy experience or that of another, we suggest bringing it along as a way to build your relationship with the applicant.

Imagine *helping the student realize the full benefit of attending the Academy. Imagine him or her excited about the possibility of attending.*

Remember *that choosing a college is primarily an emotional decision for the student (and sometimes parent).*

Active duty members should normally wear Tropical Blue Long or Service Dress Blue; otherwise, business casual (slacks/skirt with shirt/blouse) is expected.

What to Look For and What to Ask During the Interview

Starting the interview in a low key, friendly, conversational manner often eases the pressure some applicants feel. The hardest part is getting started. Remember to smile! You might want to talk about the interview process itself, the kinds of questions that you are going to ask and the kinds of responses you are seeking. Or, you might initially steer the conversation to the applicant's school and his or her experiences. Whatever you chose, the beginning of the interview should be as relaxing and non-threatening as possible.

While it might be helpful to discuss academic credentials or review extracurricular activities during the "warm up," the meeting **shouldn't** focus on test scores, honors, or transcripts. The Admissions Division has this information. Instead, we need your personal insights in order to "flesh out" the application. Please do not ask directly for test scores or grades during the interview. We feel this will avoid prejudicing one way or another. If a student hands you a transcript, it's enough to briefly comment and move on.

Look for signs of character, intellect, and special motivation. Transcripts and resumes tell of achievements and sometimes, disappointments. But they don't tell much about character, intellect, the capacity to lead, and the motives behind achievement. Character is often forged through adversity. What challenges has the applicant faced and how did she overcome them? What did he learn? To what extent does she demonstrate personal insight into her own behavior? What role have parents, educators, spiritual leaders played in the formation of this person's character?

Are the applicant's academic interests bound by the course syllabus or did the material spark an independent pursuit? If excited by physics, did it lead to a summer program sponsored outside of school? If so, what was learned? Is the student particularly pleased or dissatisfied with performance in a certain course? If so, why?

Does this applicant have the courage to challenge peers? When has he made a difficult choice between friendship and doing the right thing? How did he handle peer pressure and what choice did he make? Does the applicant demonstrate empathy and respect when discussing others, particularly peers and teachers?

Is this applicant a leader or follower? What leadership roles has she assumed, at home, in school, in church, or in the community? What was learned? What's motivating his interest in leadership opportunities? Can this applicant communicate effectively with people different from himself? Is this the type of person that people from a variety of backgrounds will respond to favorably? Are there signs of entitlement or intolerance towards others? What does this student think about the presence of women and minorities at a service academy?

Learn about context. Questions about the applicant's school, community, and special programs will help admissions reviewers place the student in local context. Given the school's offerings, has the applicant taken a challenging load? If an AP or honors course is not available in a given subject, is independent study or dual enrollment at a local college possible? Has the student taken advantage of these opportunities?

The required teacher recommendations are valuable to admissions reviewers but they often suffer from brevity, exaggeration, or something short of the whole picture. If a student is enthusiastically recommended by the school, it is helpful to know from an outside source – you – of equal enthusiasm. The interview indicates to what extent an independent source shares the school's view of an applicant. Your opinions about a student's enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, or depth of commitment to an activity complement recommendations and essays.

Ask thought provoking questions; follow leads. Questions should call for more than a limited response but they should be answerable. Avoid the "What do you think the biggest threat facing America?" type of question. If the applicant says participation in Boys State changed his life, give him an opportunity to explain how he grew and as a result of what influences. Always make sure the applicant discusses his feelings about a topic, and how it involves him. A journalist, editor, school president or team captain might be successfully challenged to develop insights on school issues, on the nature of leadership, pressures to conform, or what changes to make in school policy if given the chance.

Asking "why," "what," and "how" questions that offer the applicant a chance to think about herself and her role can also be very helpful. What events in her life have been very important to her and why? What is the most significant contribution he has made to his school or community, and what did he learn from it? What skills or abilities is she most interested in learning over the next few years and why? Ask the applicant to choose an activity that has been especially meaningful and ask for an explanation. Why was it meaningful? Pursue the topic. Always see how far you can take the interviewee and still get a response. If he says he visited France as an exchange student, ask for his observations about France, French values and views of America, the family he lived with, and his feelings when he returned. If unable to articulate that he gained much, we need to know that. This information might complement other observations in the record that will help selecting cadets.

Engage in conversation about the unique challenges & opportunities of this institution. A service academy education offers unique opportunities and challenges. Use the interview to explore

- The Honor Concept
- Physical fitness and health requirements
- Conduct and discipline system
- Character development process

Applicants' knowledge of these things will vary widely. This is fine – it's not a test. Use the interview as an opportunity to exchange information and respond to questions. Define Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. How does the applicant react to your observations about the Honor Concept? Ask him to describe the role Respect has played in his life at home or in school. Probe deeply. Does he see the relationship between respect, tolerance, and inclusion – or not? Do you suspect this applicant might feel a misplaced sense of entitlement? Does he believe that some people deserve to be at a service academy while others may not because of their race, gender, or family background?

Is the bi-annual Physical Fitness Exam (PFE) intimidating or inviting? Ask the applicant to describe stressful situations she has encountered before. How did she cope? How will these strategies work for him at the Academy? Offer encouragement based on your experiences. The unknown of physical demands of the Academy are a significant factor that most females weigh carefully.

Has this applicant ever stepped outside his comfort zone? How did he cope and what did he learn? Is this applicant willing to cut ties with his family and friends for seven weeks to experience Swab Summer? What concerns does he have?

What do her parents think about attending the Academy? Your opinions about the parents' role are very important to admissions reviewers. Are parents pushing too hard or does this student have the maturity, independence, and intrinsic drive to be a successful cadet?

Before you end the interview, allow time for the applicant to ask questions. Don't answer what you don't know, but promise to follow up – and do so – or ask the students to send their inquiry to admissions@uscga.edu. If the student expresses interest in contacting a member of the faculty or a coach, please pass the request to his Admissions Officer. If parents accompanied their child to the interview, thank them for doing so and affirm their child's performance during the interview.

Suggested Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your high school. Is there anything you would change about it?
2. What factors are you taking into consideration when making your college choices? What type of environment do you think you will thrive in? How have you gone about the process of choosing which colleges to apply to?
3. Tell me about some issues or activities you feel most passionate about.
4. What events have been crucial in your life so far?

5. If I were to ask your friends to describe who you are as a person, what would they say?
6. What academic subjects are of most interest to you and what subjects are most challenging?
7. How do you think you have changed during your four years of high school?
8. Tell me about a leader or teacher you admire and why.
9. If I were to ask your parents, teachers or coaches to describe you as a leader, what would they say?
10. Tell me about the books that have made the most impact on you.
11. What do you like and dislike about the Coast Guard Academy?
12. What do you consider to be your biggest accomplishment and why was it important to you?
13. Why do you want to go to college? To a service academy? What do you hope to achieve in the next four years? What are some of your concerns about the Academy?
14. What issues are being discussed in your school or local community and what are your thoughts on these issues?
15. Is there anything you want to bring to the attention of the Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board which we have not already discussed?

Reminders and Comments

The window of opportunity from the time you receive your assignment until the deadline to submit the interview report is very short, especially for Early Action. Please interview as quickly as possible.

While applicants are encouraged to interview, it is optional. However, Partners should contact each applicant to whom assigned to give the student the option to interview.

For many applicants, their interview with you will be the first time they participate in an interview. While you should have a substantive discussion, you should also try to put them at ease and not intimidate them.

Applicants who want to submit samples of their work or videos of their sport should be asked to mail the item to the Admissions Office or Athletic Director.

- **DON'T** discuss the applicant's chances for admission.
- **DON'T** denigrate other institutions. This usually turns applicants off rather than increase their interest in the Coast Guard Academy.
- **DON'T** interview an applicant who attends your child's high school and is also applying to the Academy. Avoid the appearance of conflict of interest. Please don't interview students you already know, or the children of your friends, co-workers, or acquaintances.

The Partners portal is the preferred method for submitting interview reports.

Finally, enjoy the process! The real reward of interviewing is meeting outstanding youngsters of your community, and helping them on their way, perhaps to the Coast Guard Academy.

WRITING THE INTERVIEW REPORT

The best interview is of no use unless it's written up properly and on time. Whatever your impressions of an applicant may be, it's important that you document your observations and opinions in a written report that can be used by the Cadet Candidate Evaluation Board (CCEB). Your report becomes part of the official record and will be read by at least three members of the Academy faculty and staff.

The text is always the most important part of the report. Comments must back up your ratings. Your opinions and enthusiasm are important and must be substantiated or the report will not carry the weight it deserves.

Keep in mind the applicant pool contains many fine candidates. Your conclusions should be made in the context of the Academy applicant pool. You will be most effective when you can help us identify the candidate who stands out even in this group.

Interview Ratings

Following are definitions of the ratings Admissions will use:

- 5:** A truly extraordinary candidate. Outstanding in multiple dimensions, "one in a hundred"
- 4:** Extremely strong candidate about whom you are genuinely enthusiastic; someone who possesses the personal qualities and strengths necessary to contribute richly to the Academy and excel as a cadet and officer
- 3:** A solid candidate, probably average in the Academy applicant pool. No glaring weaknesses. Holds promise of personal and academic growth
- 2:** A candidate about whom you have reservations, whether for academic or personal reasons. Someone who appears to have little to offer the Academy
- 1:** Definitely not recommended, badly deficient in some way

Given the limits on what can be accomplished in 45 minutes, ratings will likely cluster around "3," though the tone of your report can range from very positive to not-so-enthusiastic. The "4" and "2" are used more selectively while "1" and "5" are indeed rare.

Sample Interview Reports

Below are examples of interview reports along with our analysis of them. This should outline more clearly the kind of information that can be helpful to the admissions process.

A brief, useless report

JASON

Jason is an athletic, well dressed and articulate young man who is interested in mechanical engineering and playing baseball. He is dissatisfied with his first year at the University of Washington and wants to become more serious about his education.

Jason did not have any unique reason for wanting to attend the Academy but said his uncle introduced him to the idea two years ago. He demonstrated familiarity with military life as a Sea Scout, and the Academy's Mechanical Engineering degree, which indicates he has researched his selection of schools.

In conclusion, Jason is an excellent candidate.

Rating: 4

Beyond implying that Jason "looks the part," this interview adds nothing to the application. It raises a lot of questions about Jason's experience at the University of Washington, answering none of them. The comments don't back up a rating of "4." In contrast, if the interviewer really didn't find out much about Jason, he should have said so, or given a "3" or nothing at all.

A report like this can end up hurting rather than helping. In this case, Jason had a very strong background as a student athlete, and strong support from school but needed an extra push for an appointment. Although the interviewer might have been enthusiastic about Jason, it didn't come through and Jason was eventually denied.

A well documented negative report

MARY

This was not a good interview. Mary is difficult to talk to, answering questions in as few words as possible. I tried hard to get her to talk at length about anything.

More disturbing was her apparent lack of interest in things happening around her. In response to a question about which social issues interested her, which was really an invitation to talk about anything, she said there weren't any of real interest. When pressed, she said they did not affect her so she didn't care.

Mary is interested in psychology and the sciences, taking courses in these areas. She works three days a week at a local grocery store and interns at a local research center, which she appears to enjoy and consider worthwhile. She says she is busy with that and schoolwork and has little time for anything else except her friends.

Mary described almost no activities other than these that she enjoyed or thought about. She lacked insight into herself, her high school, and fellow students and showed little interest in leadership responsibilities. She asked several questions about the Academy which I think may

have been prompted by her Dad, an Academy grad himself. She is concerned about meeting the physical fitness standards, which does not surprise me given her lack of physical activity. She appears to be pressured to apply. Overall, I was very unimpressed.

Rating: 1

This report could have been scored as a 2 or 3; regardless, it is well substantiated. If this report was consistent with other parts of Mary's admission file, she would be rejected. On the other hand, if it was out of line with everything else, admissions reviewers might wonder whether it was a bad day for Mary, bad chemistry between Mary and the interviewer, or a simmering conflict with her father.

An unsubstantiated "5"

JEN

I spent one hour interviewing Jen. It is easy to see that she is a very accomplished person. Almost casually Jen mentioned she is ranked first in her class at Valley High. Later I learned she scored 1400 on the SAT exam. She won the Rennsalaer Medal for math and science, and expects to hear back soon about her application to the Westinghouse Scholarship program. She is in the National Honor Society and is the President of the school as well as Captain of the varsity soccer team. Her father is a Naval Academy grad who works in the financial sector now. As a result, she is very comfortable with the many challenges that attending a service academy involve. Jen wants to get her law degree and may consider aviation. She is an outstanding person with great confidence in herself.

Rating: 5

This is a good example of an unsubstantiated "5." Jen is obviously a very able candidate and the interviewer is very enthusiastic. Yet, the report tells us nothing we didn't already know from reading the application folder. It would have been helpful to know why she involved herself in the things she did, and if the commitment is superficial or deep, why some activities might be more satisfying than others, and what she thinks about them. Given her father's alma mater, it would also be helpful to know what role her parents are playing, what attracts her to the Coast Guard and how she sees the Coast Guard Academy fitting into her future plans.

Jen eventually received an appointment but only after she was interviewed again by Admissions to answer these questions.

A solid, helpful “3”

SEAN

Sean chooses his words deliberately and with great care. He strikes me all around as a thoughtful, quiet leader who earns the respect of adults and peers. It took him some time to warm up to the interview, to be able to articulate his thoughts (which revealed a well informed and empathic person). Analyzing his summer experiences (which included a mission trip to Honduras and travel to Europe to perform with his choral group) Sean talked about his curiosity and respect for cultures and people different from himself. He seemed to be concerned with various definitions of achievement and non-conformity in each social situation. When I asked which of his accomplishments make him the proudest, he pointed to the challenges of the crew team, which he captains. He began his crew career as the weakest oarsman but decided to stick with it and now loves the feel of the water and the friendships he has made.

His other interests range from politics to robotics. He spoke knowledgably about current world affairs and the difference between journalism and scholarship. He values the “behind the scenes” perspective in Iraq and wishes to see more of it. He is impressed by the Academy’s small size, camaraderie of the cadets, and humanitarian missions.

I don’t know if Sean’s initial hesitation was the result of insecurity or nervousness, or just looking for the right words. He impressed me overall as a truly interesting candidate who will mature as a leader and go on to contribute in a variety of ways to the Academy and officer corps.

Rating: Strong “3”

This is a balanced, solidly supported interview report that gives admissions reviewers a much better sense of who Sean is. Sean isn’t portrayed as a superstar, but the interviewer’s positive feelings are evident. Importantly, the report gives excellent insight to Sean’s character, values, and motives. With a solid academic record, he received an appointment.

A well documented “4”

JONATHAN

Jonathan was great. He is mature, intelligent, sociable, dynamic, and extremely passionate about a number of things. He wants to serve his country and he admires the Coast Guard most of all the military services.

I was very impressed with Jonathan. Around every turn his interests and knowledge seem to grow. First we talked about his high school and his job as Editor of the Yearbook. He talked excitedly about his innovations including a three dimensional page. Our conversation turned to his love for science and engineering. Jonathan leads his regionally ranked science Olympiad team. When he explained his projects and the events he has done, I was impressed by the depth of his commitment, and enthusiasm. I can definitely see him as a serious engineering student, someone capable of addressing major engineering/social problems. He is also outgoing. This

summer he worked as a tour guide and exhibit manager at a children's science museum. He loved making dirt pies with the kids and sported a big smile to prove it. He will return next summer because he enjoyed the experience so much.

Jonathan is not sure that he will major in engineering. He has many interests that he looks forward to exploring in college, including his passion for basketball and music. "I like the speed and strategy of the game. Win or lose, it's great teamwork." As a tenor sax player he leads his own jazz band and occupies the first chair in the city's youth symphony orchestra, where he has received awards at the state level.

I did not get a sense of how Jonathan interacts with peers, but during the interview he was very comfortable. He seems very well rounded, articulate, and eager and able to take on all the challenges of Academy life. His family is supportive but not calling the shots. Students like Jonathan are the reason this process exists. He will contribute to cadet life and the officer corps in many ways.

Rating: 4

The interviewer's enthusiasm is evident. Not only does the report provide information about Jonathan's accomplishments, it also documents the interviewer's impression of Jonathan. The essays and recommendation confirm Jonathan's personal and extracurricular strengths. With a solid transcript, he would be an attractive applicant.

Some Final Comments on the Written Report

You should not feel the need to make **the** definitive statement about an applicant, or even to tell us that you feel the student should or should not be admitted. It is often impossible to come to such a conclusion after one conversation. Many good interview reports combine facts with opinion, impressions, and feelings. Even inconclusive 'hunches' can be important when they are echoed in other recommendations. If you have positive feelings but reservations about some qualities, we would like to know that. Some of the most helpful reports are the ones that provide these balanced observations. Again, whatever your impressions, we hope you will document them in the report. Although the interview report is only one document among many in a record, it can be one of the most useful in establishing a sense of the individual behind the credentials.

SUBMITTING THE INTERVIEW REPORT

Your written interview summary should be submitted to the Academy Admissions Office via the most convenient means within one day of the interview:

Online: www.uscga.edu/interviewform

Fax: 860.701.6700

Mail: Director of Admissions (tp)
U.S. Coast Guard Academy
31 Mohegan Ave
New London, CT 06320

Email: Admissions@uscga.edu

TIPS FROM EXPERIENCED INTERVIEWERS

Experienced interviewers have shared the following tips and observations for others to consider, especially novice admissions interviewers.

Remember: *You don't sell the Academy experience and programs, or your ideas to students...they will accept them when they perceive that the experience and programs will fit **their** needs, satisfy their wants, or solve their problems. You don't recruit students because they understand the Academy, but because they feel that **you** understand **them**.*

Do your best to understand what each student wants. It could be anything from a prestigious degree, to an education "better than their parents had" to a starring role on the basketball team.

Do your best to understand why they want it. Research shows there are seven things that motivate college choice. Part of your job as an interviewer is to identify which apply:

- Convenience or comfort (complying with a parent's demand, avoiding the congressional nomination process, tuition free, being close to home, etc.)
- Love or friendship (best friend is applying, sister is there now, desire to please parents, opportunity to meet others, etc.)
- Peace of mind, sense of security (it's safe, will have a job, likes order)
- Social approval or prestige
- Enhanced quality of life
- Financial well being (avoiding debt, avoiding work to pay for college, etc.)
- Stylishness

A few tips about how to respond during the interview:

- **Smile.** If you can't smile, you're not ready to interview.
- **Be Ready.** Have everything you need in one place in the order you need it, including a photo album or Yearbook of the Academy, notepaper and pen. Know where the student is in the admissions process and what the next step should be.
- **Be Enthusiastic.** If you're not enthusiastic, the student won't be.
- **Repeat the Student's Name.** Each time you say a student's name they will pay strict attention to the next five words you say.

- **Listen Carefully.** People who earn a living contacting others are often the worst listeners. SIT UP AND LISTEN. Talk no more than 20% of the time. Do not fill silent pauses with your words...wait for the student.
- **Show Empathy.** Think like the student. His or her problems or needs are what is important.
- **Stress Value Added.** Differentiate the Academy from other colleges or service academies. Emphasize the benefits, drawing on your own experience.
- **Do your homework.** Please read up on the Academy. It's changed over the years. See www.uscga.edu.
- **Get a Specific Commitment.** Make sure you know where the student is in the admissions process. Get agreement and commitment to take the next step.
- **Make Notes.**
- **Affirm the Student's Potential for Success.**

BACKGROUND ON HONOR CONCEPT, CONDUCT SYSTEM, AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

You are asked to address these areas during your interview session. This information is provided to assist you.

As a Partner, you should be familiar with unique aspects of the Academy experience including the Honor Concept, conduct and discipline system, character development process, and physical fitness and health expectations. As an interviewer, you are part of a communication process designed to help applicants decide if they are willing to accept these requirements in order to better themselves and perform as a commissioned officer of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Honor Concept: “We revere honor. We neither lie, cheat, steal, nor attempt to deceive.”

The honor concept describes a relationship between individuals and their world at large. As a concept, Honor embodies a way of life based on honesty and integrity.

Cadets and commissioned officers swear an oath that is like the oath sworn by the President of the United States – to protect and defend the constitution of the United States. Thus, they are bound not by loyalty to their peers, the Academy, or even the Coast Guard, but by loyalty to their country and the ideals on which it was founded.

Like the oath, commitment to principles first is also the basis of the Honor Concept. This may place cadets in the difficult position of putting principles ahead of their natural loyalty to friends or classmates. The ability to know what is right and do it regardless of the consequences requires special commitment.

Cadets are also expected to learn and adhere to Coast Guard's core values: Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. Cadets are not expected to be perfect but they are expected to do their best to live up to these values.

- **Honor:** Integrity is our standard. We demonstrate uncompromising ethical conduct and moral behavior in all of our personal actions. We are loyal and accountable to the public trust.
- **Respect:** We value our diverse work force. We treat each other with fairness, dignity, and compassion. We encourage individual opportunity and growth. We encourage creativity through empowerment. We work as a team.
- **Devotion to Duty:** We are professionals, military and civilian, who seek responsibility, accept accountability, and are committed to the successful achievement of our organizational goals. We exist to serve. We serve with pride.

These core values are more than just Coast Guard rules of behavior. They are deeply rooted in the heritage that has made our organization great. They demonstrate who we are and guide our performance, conduct, and decisions every minute of every day. Because cadets represent the Coast Guard to the public, they must embrace these values during their Academy experience and in their personal lives.

Cadets who are unable to adhere to the Honor Concept and Core Values may be disciplined or even dis-enrolled. Cadets who adapt to this way of life enjoy satisfaction and the companionship of other young people and adults who put service above self.

Conduct and Discipline System

Discipline is a form of trust building. One's shipmates, aircrew, or team mates must have confidence in every officer's capacity to get the job done and hold others accountable for the same, even when the going gets tough.

Discipline is an acquired trait. Cadets adhere to a conduct system as one of several ways they learn discipline and build trust with other officers and those they later lead. Under the conduct system, cadets may be counseled or punished for violating the regulations that apply to members of the Corps of Cadets. In addition, cadets are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, a body of law that applies uniquely to members of the military.

One of the more challenging Cadet Regulations for new cadets to adapt to is the idea of "liberty" or free time. Cadets are not free to go off campus or home except during specific and limited times. It starts right away: new cadets have very little contact with friends or family (except by mail and later by cell phone) during the first seven weeks (Swab Summer).

As cadets earn their rank, they enjoy additional privileges, including more liberty, that signify their growth as a leader. They also take responsibility by their second and first class years for administering parts of the conduct and discipline system.

Cadets who are unable to adhere to the conduct and discipline system may be punished with demerits and restriction. Some may be asked to leave. Cadets who embrace the conduct and discipline system find they are well prepared to serve as an officer. They find these same traits pay off in the civilian world and are one of the leading reasons they will be so employable when they leave the Coast Guard.

Character Development Process

There is a four year character and leadership development process. This process helps cadets develop leadership competency in five domains, or realms of personal growth:

- Intellectual
- Physical
- Intrinsic Values
- Professional
- Civic

Character development is integrated into the academic and experiential life of each cadet, including:

- Military training and duty assignments within the Corps of Cadets
- Summer programs
- Academic courses
- Physical and athletic development
- The advising process

Through these experiences, each cadet develops leadership competencies that are defined in terms of their rank and experience:

Fourth Class (Freshmen): Apprentice Followers

Third Class (Sophomores): Apprentice Leaders

Second Class (Juniors): Supervisory Leaders

First Class (Seniors): Organization Leaders

Applicants should understand that as new cadets they will learn to follow before they learn to lead. This can be a challenge for students who are already used to leadership roles in high school. Further, by design, new cadets will be trained to cope with stress. This is necessary because Coast Guard missions often take place in threatening environments where lives are at stake.

Swab Summer is similar to boot camp and imposes nearly constant stress. In addition to the physical demands, Swabs will be yelled at, many for the first time in their life. Few have experienced an intimidating 20 year old yelling seemingly impossible commands inches from their face. Please help prepare applicants for this experience by explaining its purpose and how others have gained from the overall experience of Swab Summer and Academy life.