



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE ACADEMIC DEAN AND PROVOST
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
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June 27, 2006

Mr. W. Spencer Johnson IV
President, USNA Class of 1963
1604 Trawler Lane
Annapolis, MD 21409

Mr. David B. Puckett
Chairman, USNA Class of 1963 Foundation, Inc.
5051 Chatham Way
Toledo, OH 43615

Dear Spencer and Dave:

I am pleased to respond to your letter of March 21, 2006 concerning the future of the Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence. As the primary donor to the Center, your Class has led the way in assuring its viability. As a result, the Class of 1963 has made a huge difference in the academic achievements of hundreds of midshipmen, and that contribution will continue in the years ahead. Now, as we chart the Center's course for the future, we would like to engage with you and your Class regarding how we might strengthen our work together in support of the midshipmen.

I enclose a status report on the Center that I trust will both address your questions concerning mission, accomplishments and future plans and help to inform your decision about a 50th reunion gift. The Center has clearly made a tremendous impact at the Academy. Nevertheless, I am concerned about its future, given what we know about available funding streams. We want to be in a firm position to continue to respond to the current and emerging academic needs of our students. Consequently, we must find a way to assure ongoing funding for the learning specialists and professional tutors who are so fundamentally important to the program's support for midshipmen.

As you may note from the bottom of this letter, I have copied Dick Johnson, Executive Vice President of the Foundation, in this communication. I anticipate that he will be in touch with you very soon to discuss its contents and mutually develop a forward strategy.

With best regards,

W. C. MILLER
Academic Dean and Provost

Enclosure

Copy to: Richard W. Johnson, II

P.S. Thank you for your patience in awaiting this response. Your inquiry caused us to conduct a thorough assessment of the center and its funding needs, and this took more time than we had anticipated.



Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence Mission, Impact & Future Direction June 2006

Mission

The U. S. Naval Academy Academic Center was established in 1989 as a result of a Minority Midshipmen Study Group Report highlighting the need for a proactive academic support program. The original mission of the Center was to provide the highest quality academic support programs for the entire Brigade of Midshipmen. In 2003, the name of the Center was changed to the *Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence* as a way to recognize the generous support of the Naval Academy Class of 1963. We are commonly referred to as “the Academic Center” or simply “the Center.” Although our name has changed and our mission statement has been modified, the objective of the Center has remained constant:

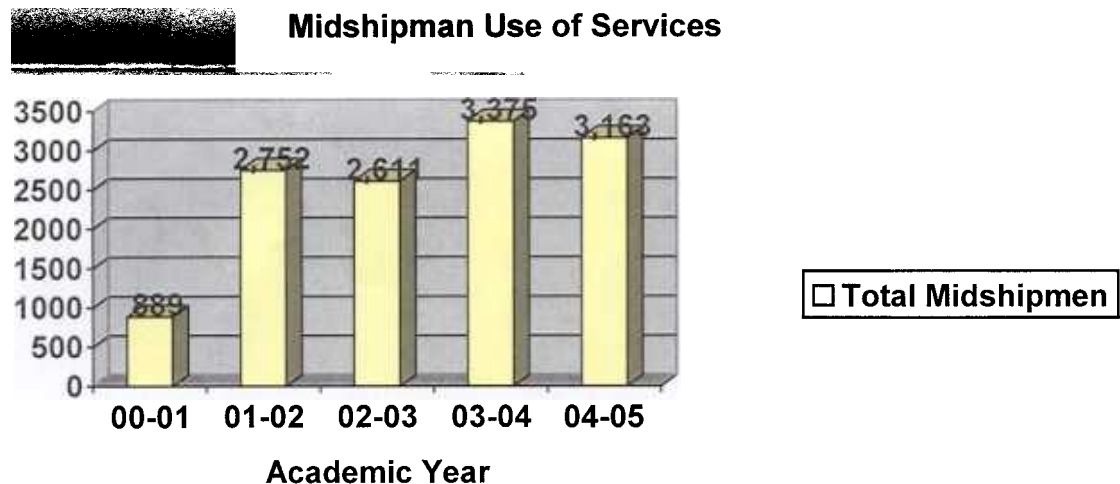
The mission of the Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence is to provide the highest quality academic support programs for the entire Brigade of Midshipmen.

Simply stated, the Center for Academic Excellence exists to help all U.S. Naval Academy midshipmen improve their academic performance.

Impact

Quantitative Measures

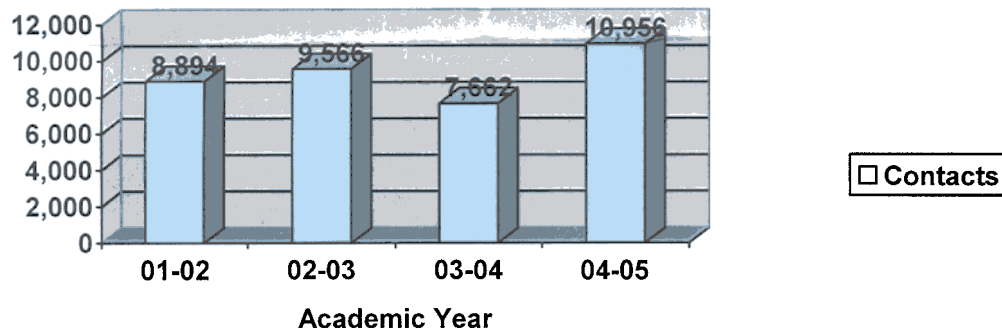
The last several years have been especially active ones for the Academic Excellence Center staff. The chart below shows the dramatic increase in midshipman use of services. The increase seen during the 01–02 academic year relates to the establishment of the Midshipman Group Study Program. The change from the 03–04 to the 04–05 academic year can be attributed to a reduction in the number of volunteers supporting Plebe Intervention and Reading & Learning Skills programs. A reduction in available instructors has necessitated a reduction in the amount of service being provided.



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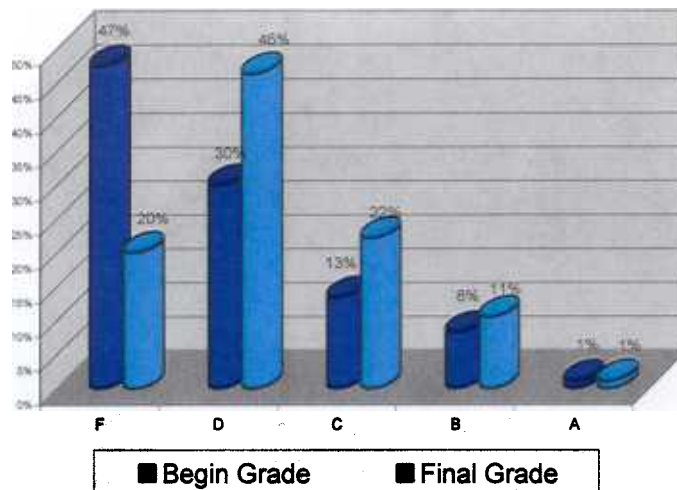
Service provided to midshipmen can also be measured by the amount of contact that Center staff have with midshipmen. Over the past four years, the Center has provided an average of 9,000 contact hours annually. Midshipman contact hours over the last four years are shown below. There are two probable explanations for the drop in midshipman contact hours shown during the 2003-2004 academic year. In September 2003, the Naval Academy experienced significant damage to its infrastructure due to Hurricane Isabel. This disaster left several buildings without power and affected the operation of MGSP. During September and into October, sessions were moved to various locations on the yard that could accommodate the groups. However, attendance was affected. In addition, during the month of November, in an effort to upgrade the MGSP computer system by moving it onto the network, more than 3 weeks of attendance data were lost in the transformation.

Midshipman Contact Hours



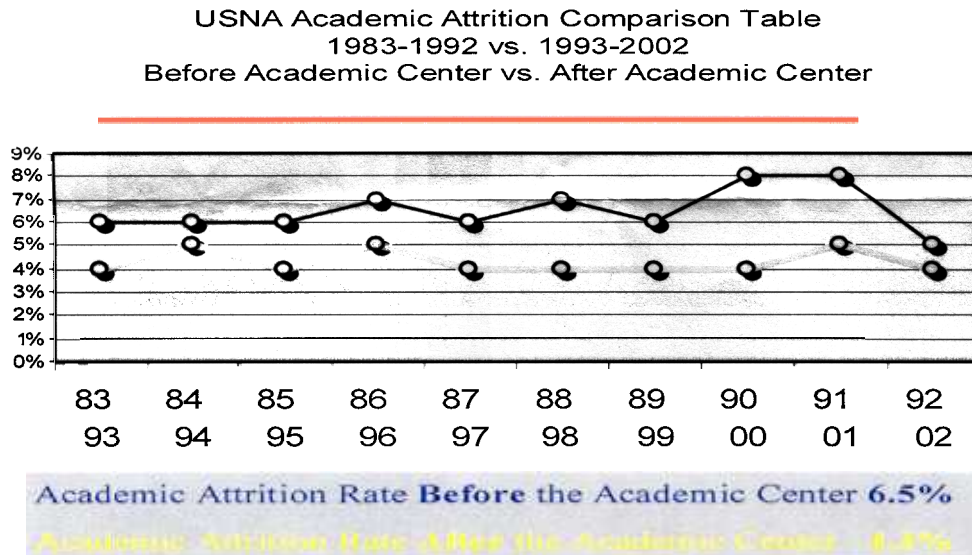
The impact of the Center can also be seen in the positive grade changes for midshipmen who utilized the tutoring services. During the last academic year, 46 of the 98 students accepted into the tutoring program were receiving a failing grade (F) in the course when they first requested tutoring. By the end of the semester, that number was reduced to 19 students. Similarly, of the midshipmen who received tutoring, only 21 had a C or better at the time of initial request. By the end of the semester, 33 were receiving a C or better in the course. The chart below illustrates the grade changes from entry into the program to the final course grade.

**Grade Changes as a Result of Tutoring
AY 04 - 05**



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Academy attrition rates are another broad indicator of the impact of the Center since its inception. The table below compares the academic attrition rates for the ten years before and after the Academic Center was established. As can be seen, the average academic attrition rate before the Center was established was 6.5% while the average rate for the ten years after the Center was established was 4.3%. Attrition rate is computed at graduation. The graduating Class of 1993 was the first class to have had the option of using the Academic Center services throughout their time at the Academy.



Qualitative Measures

Although student comments are not quantitative, they do provide a flavor of the evaluations of the services that have been provided. The following comments were obtained from midshipmen who had used various services of the Center:

From a midshipman athlete about the Reading and Learning Skills course:

"I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you how much the Academic Center, but more importantly, people who work there, have helped bolster my grades. Playing a varsity sport in the fall and trying to balance a full schedule was difficult and as a result I ended the semester with a 1.68. With the study tips, weekly meetings, and organization ideas that the Academic Center gave me I was able to boost my second semester QPR to a 2.5. I am grateful to you for all the help and extra effort you made on my behalf."

From an officer who used the Center services as a midshipman:

"Not all good officers are necessarily academically sound - history is replete with examples to support this assertion. The Academic Center permits the Naval Academy to accept candidates who might not have a stellar high school education but have great potential to reflect credit upon this institution and the profession of arms. 'He who does not risk, cannot win': the Academic Center permits the Naval Academy to take those risks, and to win."

"The Academic Center made it possible for me to come from a state with poor educational resources, press through the Academy experience, [and] go on to fly tactical strike aircraft for the Marine Corps, and even to return to Annapolis to teach. I couldn't ask for a better series of opportunities than the one the Center gave me."

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From a midshipman who received Tutoring assistance:

"This is an excellent program that has helped me tremendously. [The tutor] Helped me understand the concepts... [I learned] how to improve my general chemistry knowledge/skills."

From midshipmen who participated in the Success Course

"I honestly don't believe I would have passed my classes without this class."

"[The instructor] was able to explain things better to me and was much more approachable [than the course professor]. We were able to talk about other problems I had that affected my performance in class. This class is much more encouraging [than my other courses] ... and help[ed] me build confidence in places / areas I did poorly in."

Future Direction

The *Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence* is currently functioning at virtually full capacity. There is certainly more that can be done to assist midshipmen but we are limited by the number of staff available, which is a function of available financial resources. Several trends suggest that demand for academic support will be increasing at the Naval Academy:

Nationally, the number of college-age students who have grown up in non-English speaking communities is increasing. These students are bright, motivated and highly qualified. They show exceptional academic and leadership potential. However, for many the challenge of excelling at highly competitive institutions is compounded by the fact that English is their second language. These students require additional assistance to develop the full understanding of English that is critical to success. This situation is occurring to a smaller degree at the Naval Academy.

The Academic Excellence Center is fortunate to have one professional with expertise in teaching English as a second language (ESL) and who is fluent in several languages. Certainly requests for her assistance will continue to increase. Similarly, there is a growing need for Naval Academy graduates to be conversant in languages other than English. The increased need for academic support in these languages will parallel the increase in the number of midshipmen taking additional languages.

An additional national trend is the use of individual tutors throughout elementary and secondary school. These students, who are attending some of the best high schools in the country, are entering college having depended upon individualized academic support to perform well. They have come to rely on individualized instruction and will enter college expecting that level of individualized instruction to continue. This trend will add to the demand already placed on faculty and academic support personnel in the Center.

While future programming and a staffing increase is certainly important, our most serious concern is long-term funding for the existing program. Simply stated, the *Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence* cannot sustain the current level of services for more than five years with our existing resources. If there is not an influx of additional funding by 2010, the Academic Excellence Center will have to eliminate staff positions and significantly scale back support provided to midshipmen. Any plan to expand services would place even greater urgency on the need to identify and raise new private gifts.