



# Strategic Sealift Officer Program

\*Formerly the Merchant Marine Reserve\*



## What is a Strategic Sealift Officer?

“It is the policy of the United States that merchant marine vessels of the United States should be operated by highly trained and efficient citizens of the United States and that the United States Navy and the merchant marine of the United States should work closely together to promote the maximum integration of the total seapower forces of the United States.” (46 USC 511)

The Strategic Sealift Officer Program (SSOP) supports the national defense sealift requirement and capabilities, as executed by Military Sealift Command. The SSOP provides naval reserve officers who are licensed merchant marine officers with sealift, maritime operations, and logistics subject matter expertise. (OPNAVINST 1534.1D)

The SSOP is significantly different from other Navy Reserve programs. The program consists of only officers, all of whom are required to maintain U.S. Coast Guard Unlimited Tonnage and Horsepower Oceans Merchant Mariner Credentials. These officers actively participate with the U.S. Navy through the Strategic Sealift Readiness Group or the Selected Reserves. (RESPERSMAN 1534)

The SSOP provides the capability for emergency crewing and shore-side support of Military Sealift Command’s Surge Sealift Fleet and the Ready Reserve Force in times of national defense or emergency.

## Obligation:

Becoming a member in the Strategic Sealift Officer Midshipmen Program obligates you post graduation to the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration

- Serve for a minimum of 8 years as a Naval Reserve Officer in the Strategic Sealift Officer Program.
- Sail for 3 years on your U.S. Coast Guard unlimited deck or engine license on a U.S. Flag vessel in the U.S. Merchant Marine.
- Maintain your U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credentials.
- Maintain a civilian career in the Maritime Industry.

## Application Requirements

- Possess a strong desire to serve in a leadership capacity as an Officer in the United States Navy
- Be a United States Citizen or National
  - If not yet naturalized, must be able to produce written evidence that they have filed a declaration of Intention to become a citizen of the United States (cannot collect any funds or commission as an Officer until a citizen)
- Be accepted to a State Maritime Academy and enrolled in a U.S. Coast Guard unlimited oceans licensing program (deck or engine).
- Be at least 17 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the date they begin the program
- Be 26 years old or less on December 31<sup>st</sup> of the calendar year that they will graduate and commission from the program
  - If a student has prior military service, this date may be extended
- Be enrolled as a full-time student (>12 credits before naval science class) with at least 2 full academic years (fall and spring semester) of undergraduate study remaining
- Within U.S. Navy height, weight, and fitness standards for Midshipmen
- Standardized test scores, grade point averages, academic, and application history is at the discretion of each individual NROTC unit’s Commanding Officer.

## How do I apply?

- Each NROTC unit has its own application tailored to their unit. Contact the NROTC unit at the school you will be attending for an application and specific entrance details and timelines
- If found physically qualified by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB) for U.S. Navy ROTC standards, in good standing within the NROTC unit, and possessing a cumulative GPA greater than 2.5, a student may be eligible for student incentive payments (SIP).

## Student Incentive Pay (SIP)

- Is a \$4,000/semester incentive payment from the Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration for participating in the Strategic Sealift Officer (SSO) Program. Maximum of \$32,000 over four years.
- Paid directly to the individual
- To be eligible for SIP, a student must be:
  - Found physically qualified by the Department of Defense Medical Evaluation Review Board (DoDMERB) for U.S Navy CSB
  - Have a cumulative GPA greater than 2.5 (4.0 scale)
  - In good standing with the NROTC unit in all facets of the program

## Benefits

- Serve as a Reserve Officer in the United States Navy
- Maintain your civilian career in a wide range of maritime industries
- Build a network of contacts within the Navy that can help your civilian career
- Gained experience serving in the Navy will transition to your civilian career
- Augment the active-duty forces by bringing civilian maritime expertise to the Navy
- Department of Defense (DoD) pay and health benefits
- Leadership training and experience