Naval Academy Makes More Room for Keeping Midshipmen Safe



Midshipman 3rd Class Angelina Chan receives the COVID-19 vaccine, which is currently voluntary for active duty members, including midshipmen, while it is in an Emergency Use Authorization status. Vaccinating the midshipmen now will allow them to participate in summer training programs to meet Navy requirements. *U.S. Navy/ MC2 Nathan Burke*

Due to what Naval Academy officials are calling an "an uptick in positive cases within the Brigade of Midshipmen," increased COVID-19 mitigation measures have been implemented, to include a full restriction of movement.

Ninety-eight midshipmen are now being housed in the Hilton Garden Inn, and an additional 98 midshipmen have been moved to the Graduate Hotel, both located on West Street in downtown Annapolis, to provide more quarantine and isolation space in Bancroft Hall, the Naval Academy's dormitory.

The midshipmen in the hotels will attend classes virtually and

be required to stay in their rooms except when “escorted outdoors at set times for wellness purposes.”

Meals are being served as “grab and go” via King Hall, as they have been since the midshipmen returned over the summer. Because food deliveries from off base are restricted, the Naval Academy Business Services Division is providing some complimentary menu items directly to the midshipmen currently in isolation.

“This is a dynamic situation and decisions are made on a daily basis in a way that prioritizes the healthcare needs of the midshipmen and well-being of our entire Naval Academy community,” said Superintendent Vice Adm. Sean Buck. “I am thankful for the flexibility and adaptability of the Brigade and our entire team here on the Yard and in the local community as we navigate this challenging period, especially the hotels for their responsiveness and hospitality.”

During a virtual address on Feb. 28., Buck said, “The health and safety of our entire Naval Academy family is, and will remain, my highest priority while we continue to execute our mission of developing our future naval leaders.

“We need this to be an all-hands effort from our faculty, staff, coaches … this is not just a midshipman effort,” Buck said. “Additionally, those who may have approved credentials to access the Yard, such as sponsors, parents, active/reserve/retired military, shall refrain from visiting the Naval Academy, even to drop off deliveries, at this time in order to minimize the spread of this virus.”

A shot in the arm

While the academy had already been inoculating staff and faculty, the midshipmen began receiving the vaccination on March 11.

“The Navy has prioritized vaccinating the operational forces

first, and they're developing very safe and healthy bubbles. For midshipmen to participate in summer training programs to meet Navy requirements, we need to begin vaccinating them now," Buck said.

According to USNA Public Affairs Officer Cmdr. Alana Gara, "A total of 1,800 vaccines were administered to midshipmen, faculty, and staff last week, and will continue to vaccine this week based on the number of vaccines received."

Summer STEM Camp

USNA officials decided to host its 2021 Summer Seminar and Summer STEM Camp virtually. According to a statement from the academy, the decision was made "to protect the health and welfare of our summer program attendees, as well as our midshipmen, faculty and staff for each program. It is also necessary to move these programs to a virtual format for 2021 in order to enable the Naval Academy to safely prepare for the induction of the incoming Class of 2025."

Due to the pandemic, last year's Summer Seminar and STEM Camp were forced to be virtual events. Based on that experience, the 2021 event will "offer enhanced programming. "This year, STEM Camp participants will receive USNA STEM kits to support engagement during the academic modules. Additionally, participants for both programs will receive USNA apparel and promotional items specific to their program."

The Summer Seminar is open to rising 12th graders. The STEM Camp is for rising 9th graders. Applications for both programs remain open until March 31, 2021, at https://www.usna.edu/Admissions/Programs/index.php.