

## **Fiscal Year 2009 Meeting Schedule**

October 2-4, 2008	*	February 3, 2009
April 1-2, 2009	*	August 5, 2009

The National Fire Academy (NFA) Board of Visitors (BOV) reviewed the Academy in three areas of responsibility and submitted the following annual report.

***“An examination of Academy programs to determine whether these programs further the basic missions which are approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).”***

The NFA continues to be a mission-critical organizational unit within FEMA/DHS in supporting FEMA’s mission to support citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards. The NFA has a track record of effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling this mission.

The traditional role of NFA has expanded over the years in response to changing FEMA/DHS priorities. Courses have been developed and updated to address new challenges in the interest of ensuring the uniformity of the course content being delivered by FEMA/DHS to all emergency responders. The training courses that have been developed and implemented in the National Incident Management System area are illustrative of the significant work that has been accomplished.

The NFA continues to play a key role in working with stakeholder groups and soliciting their input with respect to course development and delivery. This single point of contact with organizational stakeholders has improved customer service with respect to the new challenges faced by these stakeholders.

The NFA BOV serves as the conduit for the receipt of official stakeholder input. To facilitate this process, the BOV established the following subcommittees:

- ***Accreditation***

The BOV reviewed the National versus Regional accreditation at the request of the Superintendent in response to continuous correspondence from Columbia Southern University, a nationally accredited university. In addition to the members of the BOV, there were professors from around the country from fire degree programs who reviewed the processes of Regional accreditation and National accreditation. The result of this review was to sustain the Regional accreditation requirements for the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) admission.

- ***Professional Development***

The Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) initiative has experienced significant success over the past year, highlighted by the roll-out of FESHE 3.0 which uses social networking technologies to build momentum for professional development throughout the Nation. This initiative has attracted the interest of numerous states and large municipal fire departments. The NFA staff are assisting States' training systems as they plan and conduct higher education summits. The FESHE initiative continues enhancing existing linkages and developing new ones with NFA stakeholder groups.

- ***EMS***

The NFA continues to include more Emergency Medical Services (EMS) content in its courses. In response to the USFA Reauthorization Act of 2008, the BOV established an EMS Subcommittee to convene relevant stakeholder groups to create a path for curriculum development and delivery. This is in addition to the ongoing initiative by FESHE to include EMS as part of its integrated professional development strategies.

- ***Applicant Outreach***

The BOV established a Subcommittee to explore ways of enhancing outreach to potential NFA applicants, particularly those from underrepresented groups. A broad stakeholder group was formed from organizations that represent firefighters from minority groups and participated in four conference calls with BOV Subcommittee members and NFA staff. The group received voluminous data and reports on program activities. The effort is ongoing.

While many students from across the Nation attend NFA classes offered at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland, NFA continues to leverage its resources through delivery of Regional and State courses and a growing number of distance education course offerings through the Internet.

Of particular note is NFA's partnership with the National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWCG) to deliver online courses to provide structural firefighters the classroom portion of the requirements for Wildland certification. The NFA and NWCG also partnered to develop the skill sets to help structural firefighters meet the Wildland certification standards.

The NFA staff continues to pursue new applications for technology in both course delivery and information dissemination. One example is the implementation of an online contract instructor bid process. Plans are in place to further extend the simulation laboratory capabilities through the use of the Internet.

The Endorsement process instituted several years ago has allowed State training systems to submit courses that they have developed for consideration as "NFA endorsed courses" and to share with other States. The Endorsement process is now completely electronic for collection, distribution and peer review.

The Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) continues to play a crucial role in the preparation of the next generation of fire officers. A number of enhancements in this program have been made over the past year, including an increase of the minimum application requirements from an associate degree to bachelor degree.

The NFA Internship Program continues to attract participants from West Point as well as well as from fire and emergency degree programs across the Nation.

The infusion of technology as an educational delivery mechanism is evident at NFA. In addition to a growing array of online courses, NFA plans to initiate "Easy Training" which, through information technology, will enable students across the Nation to participate in NFA and State training courses. This will meet the need in many fire departments for required annual refresher training and is being pilot-tested in seven States.

The pilot project to convert 2-week courses to 1-week courses continues and will likely result in the conversion of some additional courses in the future. The NFA will continue monitoring student enrollment and application data to determine the future of this initiative.

The NFA now awards Continuing Education Units (CEU) credit for all NFA courses. This is beneficial to a growing number of NFA students who are required to meet continuing education requirements for certification.

The American Council on Education conducted its annual review of NFA courses. In addition to the 12 new courses that were reviewed, 25 older courses were submitted for review. All courses reviewed received college credit recommendation.

***“An examination of the physical plant of the Academy to determine the adequacy of the Academy facilities.”***

The size, age, and scope of the NETC campus present many challenges from a facilities standpoint. The BOV is overwhelmed with the tremendous support FEMA has provided to address the deferred maintenance issues on campus. While much progress has been made, deferred maintenance continues to be a crucial issue. The BOV commends FEMA and NETC staff in their efforts to upgrade infrastructure in the most energy efficient manner possible.

There exists a continuing and documented need to expand the NETC facilities to accommodate the addition of 300 students per class cycle. This will require additional classroom, lodging and support space and will be crucial to NFA continuing to fully support the FEMA/DHS mission.

Campus facilities including the Learning Resource Center and the Publications office continue to provide essential support for the work of NFA.

Enhancements in technology are providing instructors with the necessary classroom instructional tools to enhance student learning. Computer support for students has been provided in the form of a student computer lab with Internet access. Efforts to provide wireless computer access are complete and have received positive response from students and visitors.

The BOV commends the continued partnership between FEMA and NETC to test prototype disaster housing. This is one more example of the USFA commitment to support the all hazards mission of FEMA/DHS.

The BOV commends the United States Fire Administration (USFA) on providing professional Information Technology (IT) staff to support campus computing activities.

***“An examination of the funding levels for Academy programs.”***

The USFA and NFA continue to demonstrate commendable stewardship with respect to the limited resources they are allocated.

It is imperative that NFA receive necessary funding in accordance with its mission and the expected role it plays within FEMA/DHS.

In addition to funding for program development and delivery, increased funding is needed for expanded campus facilities and the maintenance of current facilities.

Appropriate funding will be needed to ensure the adequacy of the campus IT infrastructure to support the growing number of courses that are delivered online.

In summary, the NFA BOV finds that the Academy is well positioned, at present, to fulfill its articulated mission. Its progress over the past year has been commendable.

The credit for all of the achievements referenced in this report belongs to the dedicated and passionate staff and leadership of NFA and the other USFA units that support this work. Superintendent Denis Onieal, Deputy Superintendents Kirby Kiefer and Robert Neale lead this talented staff. Management, Operations and Support Services Director Ron Face and his staff deserve much credit for the NETC facility. Throughout the year, visionary leadership was provided by the United States Fire Administration’s Deputy Assistant Administrator Glenn Gaines and Assistant Administrator Kelvin Cochran.

## **Fiscal Year 2009 Board of Visitors**

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