

**Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report
August 28, 2018**

Meeting Schedule

January 10, 2018

March 16, 2018

August 27-28, 2018

The U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy (Board) reviewed the National Fire Academy (Academy) in three areas of responsibility and submits the following report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018.

An examination of Academy programs to determine whether these programs further the basic missions which are approved by the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Academy continues to be a mission-critical organizational unit within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA. It directly supports FEMA's USFA 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.

In consultation with the USFA/NFA leadership, the Board established subcommittees to address salient mission specific issues. In FY 2018, the BOV spent a significant amount of time evaluating and making recommendations for changes to the EFO Program at the NFA. The BOV convened four subcommittees comprised of a broad range of stakeholders representing national fire and emergency service organizations. Each subcommittee held monthly conference calls to deliberate and discuss the issues at hand. This resulted in submissions of recommendations to the BOV (see attached). After thoughtful deliberation, the BOV unanimously approved the recommendations of each subcommittee.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) subcommittee did not meet due to staffing vacancies caused by attrition. We are very appreciative of the new staff hired and look forward to working with them this next year. This ongoing effort will help support fire departments nationwide as they harness the power of advanced data analytics for their communities.

The Academy continues to play a vital role by serving as a single point of contact for national, state, local, tribal, and territorial fire and emergency medical services stakeholder groups by soliciting their input on course development, delivery and outreach. The Academy also supports federal partners, including: Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration; National Wildfire Coordinating Group, Department of Justice/Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Federal Bureau of Investigation and other Department of Homeland Security components. In addition to its Federal partners, the Academy continues to work closely with all major fire and emergency services stakeholders.

The Board continues to support the USFA Professional Development Initiative through USFA's three major networks – Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE/training), Prevention Advocacy Resources and Data Exchange (PARADE/prevention), and Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE/higher education). The fifth annual Professional Development Summit was held June 13-16, 2018, with 116 attendees from across the nation. In conjunction with the TRADE and FESHE leadership, the Board recommends Academy staff work to evaluate changes needed to bolster professional development in the nation's fire service. The BOV supports the Professional Development Initiative subcommittee's plan to meet in January, 2019, for the purpose of evaluating and determining the future of the Professional Development Summit.

The Managing Officer (MO) program serves mid-level managers in fire/EMS and emergency services organizations. Since August, 2018, 149 students have graduated from the MO program. Managing Officer classes are scheduled quarterly in tandem with EFO Program classes whenever possible. The BOV encourages Academy staff to continue their work with state fire training directors to ensure that MO pre-requisite classes are offered at the state level. The BOV recommends evaluation of the MO program similar to the EFO program evaluation that just concluded.

The BOV requests that Academy staff expand outreach efforts through and with partner organizations and increase visibility at national fire service events to share training and education opportunities available for career and volunteer members with a focus on underrepresented stakeholders. The outcome of this initiative should focus on increasing diversity among students and instructors.

Academy Overview

Resident classes are reserved for those requiring high level discussion/interaction, specialized simulation or modeling capabilities, close supervision and counsel, or the introduction of new subject areas. The Academy continues to leverage its resources through delivery of regional and state courses and a growing number of on-line distance learning courses. The BOV continues to actively encourage evaluative research and targeted efforts that positively and significantly impact workplace and student diversity.

The following chart reflects the student completions in each of the course delivery areas. Data for 2018 will be available after December 1, 2018:

	2015	2016	Change %	2017	Change %
NFA Sponsored Resident	7,458	7,298	-2.1%	6,107*	-16.3%
NFA Sponsored Non-Resident	5,030	4,966	-1.3%	5,409	+8.9%
State Sponsored	25,312	24,333	-3.9%	25,835	+6.2%
State Approved	9,825	9,644	-1.8%	9,362	-2.9%
Colleges/Universities	3,413	4,949	+45%	5,537	+12.0%
Online Self-Study	35,318	52,067	+47%	50,523	-3.0%
Total	86,356	103,257	+20%	102,773	-0.5%

**Reduction was due to required class cancellations as campus was utilized for FEMA Disaster Training/deployment.*

The Academy staff continues to pursue new applications for technology in course delivery, administration, and information dissemination. The Academy continues to add courses to the materials download feature, giving state fire training agencies and contract instructor’s direct access to Academy 2-day and 6-day course materials. This provides users with real-time access to Academy course materials. Currently, 56 courses are available that state fire training offices can download. Access to these course materials is also available to state Emergency Medical Services organizations as well.

The EFO Program continues to play a crucial role in the preparation of the next generation of fire and emergency medical services leaders. The 30th Annual EFO Program Graduate Symposium was held April 6-7, 2018, and included 197 participants. This year’s symposium featured a broad mix of presentations reflecting the EFO Program community’s needs.

The Academy awards Continuing Education Units (CEU) for all Academy courses through the International Association of Continuing Education and Training. This is extremely beneficial to a growing number of Academy students who are required to meet continuing education requirements for certification. In addition, the Academy is a “Preferred Provider” with the International Code Council (ICC); this program recognizes and promotes ICC-approved educational opportunities as they relate to codes, standards, building construction and other subject areas.

The American Council on Education (ACE) conducted its annual review of Academy courses on September 18-19, 2018, which included 24 courses. The ACE review process provides an independent and objective third-party assessment of the Academy’s academic quality, as well as a tangible benefit for students who can use the credit recommendation to pursue higher education through other academic institutions.

The BOV supports Academy staff efforts to reestablish the analysis that crosswalks and compares NFA classes to national fire service standards.

The Academy continued a systematic study of its resident courses with students and their supervisors to determine long-term training effectiveness. During FY 2018, 346 students and 306 supervisors responded to the Long Term Evaluation. As with previous years' responses, students indicated they were able to transfer the training skills and learning to their jobs, and supervisors reported improved performance. The data shows:

Long-Term Evaluation Reporting Elements	2015	2016	2017	2018
Students reporting they were able to apply Academy training at home	95.9%	91.2%	96.4%	91.0%
Students reporting Academy training improved their job performance	96.2%	94.4%	96.6%	97.1%
Students reporting they shared Academy training with their peers	97.9%	97.7%	99.0%	97.9%
Students reporting they conducted formal courses with Academy material	27.4%	24.4%	26.6%	24.8%
Students reporting they established new policies and procedures based on Academy training	84.4%	72.5%	69.3%	77.1%
Supervisors reporting improved performance from Academy training	90.5%	90.9%	85.5%	90.9%
Supervisors reporting improved departmental performance	88.5%	86.6%	88.4%	91.1%
Supervisors who say they will recommend Academy training to others	97.2%	96.7%	95.7%	97.4%
Supervisors reporting Academy benefits outweigh costs	92.2%	91.6%	99.2%	94.7%

Note: Data reported was derived from Academy Long-Term Evaluation Forms sent to both students and their supervisors 4–6 months after the Academy training class ended.

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 facility continues to offer both challenges and opportunities. On behalf of students and other stakeholders, the BOV appreciates the tremendous support FEMA has provided to address capital improvement and maintenance issues on campus. We applaud the continued outstanding work of the NETC Management, Operations and Support Services to manage the physical plant and numerous activities held on campus each year.

While much progress has been made, particularly relating to Americans with Disability Act compliance and energy efficiency, deferred maintenance continues to be a critical issue. Currently, there remains about \$35 million in deferred maintenance. The BOV recommends that FEMA establish an additional annual \$5 million deferred maintenance allocation for the NETC campus. The BOV commends FEMA and NETC staff in their ongoing efforts to upgrade and maintain the aging physical infrastructure.

Campus facilities include the Library and the Publications Center which continues to provide essential support for Academy students. However, there remains a long documented need to expand the NETC facilities to accommodate the addition of 300 students per class cycle. While the NETC maintains one of the highest utilization rates in DHS, additional classroom, lodging and support space will be required for the Academy to continue fully supporting the broader DHS/FEMA mission.

The MOSS should request additional funds specifically to address aging driveway and parking surfaces. Installation of solar panels on appropriate campus facilities should continue along with replacement of lighting fixtures with energy efficient solutions. The BOV supports a redesign of the main entrance area to enhance security of staff and students with a visually appealing portal.

Enhancements in technology are providing instructors with the necessary tools to use contemporary adult learning principles and practices. To meet current technology requirements, the Academy continues to upgrade the classroom environment. Although there have been recent improvements, students and BOV members experience issues with internet connectivity and access campus wide. As an example, the FEMA firewall prevents access to many sites necessary for research, collaboration and data storage. The BOV recommends appropriate funding to improve internet and data access on campus and the campus information technology infrastructure to support the growing number of courses that are delivered to complete the FEMA mission.

With the growth and importance of information technology the BOV recommends the Academy and USFA seek a full time Chief Information Officer and create a branch to oversee and manage all enterprise functions.

An examination of the funding levels for Academy programs.

The USFA and the Academy continue to demonstrate commendable stewardship with respect to fiscal responsibility. While the operational budget has remained relatively stable, inflation results in higher costs for operations. It is imperative that the Academy receive an increase in funding to maintain its mission and the expected role it plays within DHS/FEMA.

The Academy is unique in the Federal Government because its specific mission is to train state, local, tribal, and territorial first responders and their leaders, not primarily Federal employees. A reduction in resident classes at the Academy would result in a degradation of incident management capabilities, community risk reduction, hazardous materials response, and arson detection and prosecution.

While there is a cost to both on-campus and off-campus training, it's important to recognize that every emergency, every disaster starts locally. To the extent that a community has a well-trained, well-led cadre of first responders, that emergency stays local. If it is poorly handled, or if it is so large that the local forces are overwhelmed, it may trigger a state and federal response. It is in the interest of both DHS and FEMA to try to keep local emergencies local; as of August 2018, there were 27,431,216 total incidents reported to NFIRS for 2017 and there were 59 presidentially-

declared major disasters reported in 2017 per
https://www.fema.gov/disasters/year?field_dv2_declaration_type_value=DR)

While training has a cost, the lack of training is even more expensive in terms of life loss (both civilian and firefighter), property damage, litigation, economic impact, and societal effects. According to the USFA data, in calendar year 2017, there were 87 on-duty firefighter fatalities and 3,400 civilian fatalities <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/statistics/>. The National Fire Protection Association estimated there were 58,835 firefighter injuries in calendar year 2017. Reports from the National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health state that some of these deaths and injuries could have been averted through training. Above all else, the Academy was created to prevent those tragedies. The BOV continues to recommend an emphasis on firefighter health and safety as a part of the overall training mission which the Academy has proactively embraced with the recruitment of a new Training Specialist to oversee its new firefighter health and safety curriculum area. The recently offered pilot classes have all been well received and show the benefits of the currency and the relevancy of the responder health and safety curricula.

Throughout FY 2018, visionary leadership was provided by the U.S. Fire Administrator and Deputy Fire Administrator. The Superintendent, now in her second year, is actively involved with the BOV to ensure the timely and relevant delivery of effective training and educational courses by well qualified instructors. The BOV is honored to collaborate on the implementation of the Superintendent's vision for the future. Finally, the BOV would like to thank the dedicated and passionate staff of the Academy, National Fire Programs Division and Management, Operations and Support Services who are responsible for the USFA's success.

The BOV thanks outgoing chair Kwame Cooper for his outstanding leadership and congratulates him for his successful and enduring career in the fire service.

Fiscal Year 2018 Board of Visitors

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