

**Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
U.S. Fire Administration  
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy  
September 9-10, 2019  
Building H, Room 300  
Teleconference**

**Attendees:**

The following members of the Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy were in attendance for the teleconference.

John S. Butler  
Fire Chief  
Fairfax County Department of Fire and Rescue  
12099 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22033

Eriks J. Gabliks  
Director  
Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards  
and Training  
4190 Aumsville Highway  
Salem, OR 97317

Dr. Patricia A. McIntosh  
Emergency Management Coordinator  
College of the Mainland  
1200 N. Amburn Road  
Texas City, TX 77591

Andrew K. Pantelis (Chair)  
District Vice President  
International Association of Fire Fighters  
3060 Mitchellville Road, Suite 217  
Bowie, MD 20716

Chief Kevin D. Quinn  
First Vice Chair  
National Volunteer Fire Council  
7852 Walker Drive, Suite 375  
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Thomas E. Romaine, Jr.  
Smokechaser  
Minnesota DNR Forestry  
644 Pfaender Drive  
New Ulm, MN 56073

George M. Stapleton  
Operations Chief  
South Carolina State Fire  
141 Monticello Trail  
Columbia, SC 29203

Steven P. Westermann (Vice Chair)  
Central Jackson Fire Protection District  
1609 NE Scarborough Drive  
Blue Springs, MO 64014

Federal Emergency Management Agency/U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy (FEMA/USFA/NFA) staff in attendance:

Mr. David Brummett, FEMA Office of Chief Counsel  
Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, USFA  
Mr. John Carnegis, Program Manager EFO and MO, NFA  
Mr. Stephen Dean, Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA  
Mr. Ken Farmer; Chief; Education, Training and Partnerships Branch; NFA  
Mr. Al Fluman; Director; USFA/NETC Management, Operations and Support Services Division  
Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist  
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, NFA  
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA  
Ms. Ellen Newlin, Program Specialist, NFA  
Dr. Denis Onieal, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA  
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire Programs Division  
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center

### **Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome**

**Mr. Andrew K. Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors**

**Dr. Denis Onieal, Deputy Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration**

**Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

**Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

Dr. Kirby Kiefer welcomed the board with opening remarks:

Good afternoon, and welcome to this meeting of the USFA/NFA Board of Visitors. This meeting is being conducted under regulations outlined in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

I want to thank you for volunteering your time, diligent work and also for completing the necessary security and ethical processes to serve as Special Government Employees.

My name is Kirby Kiefer. I am Deputy Superintendent of the NFA and will be serving as Designated Federal Official at this meeting. My role is to serve as liaison between the Board of Visitors and the USFA. I am also responsible for ensuring that all the provisions of the FACA are met regarding the operation of the Board of Visitors. You know Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp and Ms. Ellen Newlin, whose work with FACA officials at FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have made this meeting possible and made my work immeasurably easier and more productive. I want to thank them officially.

Meeting the ethics and disclosure requirements is critical to our operation; you have already been briefed by our ethics lawyer and FACA officer so that you understand those ethics requirements. We have an agenda as published in the Federal Register. The times listed are approximate, and we may need to adjust the agenda to accommodate schedules. We must ensure that time for deliberations is adequate and that the public has ample time to make comments.

Dextera/ZAI support staff will be taking notes and will compile minutes. Minutes will include matters discussed and conclusions reached by the board. As Designated Federal Official, I am responsible for preparing the minutes and ensuring that they are certified by the meeting chair within 90 calendar days. All comments and notes will be available for public review forever.

You will be asked to prepare a report to the FEMA administrator as required by our enabling legislation.

Mr. Andrew K. Pantelis called the meeting to order. On behalf of the fire service, Mr. Pantelis thanked Chief Tonya L. Hoover and her team for their continued work. He stated that this is not an easy task and understands it has been challenging due to government closures, FEMA deployment and budget cuts. On behalf of the board, he expressed appreciation for their diligence and dedication to the fire service.

Dr. Kiefer reviewed the meeting agenda.

Chief Hoover introduced Dr. Denis Onieal. Dr. Onieal indicated that there are some staff changes occurring and that the positions are trying to be filled so there is not a big gap in leadership. He advised that Dr. Kiefer is retiring, and indicated the plan is to hire his replacement so that they can work together before Dr. Kiefer leaves. Dr. Onieal explained that Terry Gladhill has already retired. He said that they tried to do the same for Ms. Gladhill's position; however, filling the position from the applicants was not successful, and the position has been reopened. Dr. Onieal also stated that his retirement is coming up in January. Dr. Onieal then spoke about the facility and indicated that additional solar panels have been added. There are now six to seven buildings off the grid. He also indicated that construction at the front entrance will begin after the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. The front entrance will be upgraded to three lanes: two coming onto campus and one going out.

Chief Hoover welcomed the Board of Visitors back to campus. She thanked them for their input and stated that everything that is being done on campus is due to their hard work.

Dr. Kiefer told the board that it has been great working with Chief Hoover. He also stated that losing Ms. Gladhill on August 30 has created a big impact. Dr. Kiefer advised that he is going to try to stay around long enough to work with his replacement.

Mr. Pantelis said that the work collaboration with Ms. Gladhill, Dr. Kiefer and Dr. Onieal has been great, and they will be missed very much. On behalf of the board, Mr. Pantelis thanked them for their service.

### **USFA Strategic Plan Update**

**Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

**Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration**

The 2019-2023 USFA Strategic Plan was displayed and reviewed by Chief Hoover. She expressed her appreciation to the board members for their participation and insight.

At a later time, Chief Keith Bryant updated the Board of Visitors on the strategic plan that Chief Hoover discussed. He indicated that everyone recognizes what the fire and emergency services do. He stated the plan was written to be easily communicated. Chief Bryant explained his thoughts on each objective under the strategic plan. Chief Bryant visits classes frequently and, when on the road, asks “Have you ever been to NFA or taken a class?” He said it seems many agencies do not relay the information. He stated that the NFA needs to continue work on advertising to make sure everyone is aware. Chief Bryant believes we have more to offer to FEMA. He also indicated the NFA social media presence has increased quite a bit. Chief Bryant stated the strategic plan is not set in stone; it can be adjusted if needed. He also said that more emphasis needs to be put on health and wellness and the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). He also said the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) program revision is going well.

The board asked Chief Bryant what they can help with. Chief Bryant answered by asking for advice on the 3.5 section of the strategic goal, which is to increase the USFA’s profile on a national level. Chief Bryant said funding is limited. He explained that staff used to go out when there was a major incident, gather information and create another course. Chief Hoover has been sending training specialists out again to stay current and tries to stay in our travel funding. Chief Bryant reported that a really good, very objective, report was completed on the Parkland event. Chief Bryant said work is being completed for recruitment and retention. He also stated that an “America Burning,” a WUI-specific document, will be created that will transition into a full “America Burning” document. It has been 17 years since the last one.

Mr. Eriks J. Gabliks provided an overview of what has already happened during this meeting. He indicated that this is a stellar group of people. Mr. Gabliks stated that the reports from all the attendees were great. He advised Chief Bryant that the board of visitors is finishing up their report. He shared some of what they wrote which will hopefully help with funding. He also expressed the Board of Visitors’ concern that Emergency Management Institute (EMI) is taking classrooms but not using them. Chief Bryant said that he is a bottom-line kind of guy, and there is a bottom-line cost to run this facility. He believes that if others could see that, they would see the need to increase our budget, which has not been increased for seven to eight years. Chief Bryant stated that this is a great group to work with. Chief Bryant advised that the State Training Grant is an issue, and maintaining the facility is a major concern, funding wise. He stated that people have asked for one thing and one thing only — a specific facility for Health and Wellness on this facility. He said the involvement of the Board of Visitors is appreciated. Chief Bryant asked that any thoughts to update anything, identify or hear about, let leadership know.

Chief John S. Butler said, “Please continue to be the man who you are. It is good to see the Fire Administrator at a Suicide Prevention and the funeral of a firefighter that died. Visible and approachable is how the Board of Visitors feels about the Fire Administrator.”

## **Selection of Board Officers for FY 2020**

### **Mr. Andrew K. Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors**

Dr. Kiefer reviewed the process for the selection of board officers. He said the White House reviews the Board of Officers and approves or declines. Dr. Kiefer indicated there is typically a

three- to six-month turnaround time. Chief Hoover added that the White House only replies with a yes or a no. She explained that if someone wants to know why they were not approved, it must be sent back to the White House to obtain the reason why.

Mr. Pantelis confirmed the officer vacancies on the board and asked for nominations for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Chief Kevin D. Quinn nominated Mr. Pantelis for Chairperson; the nomination was seconded, and all were in favor. Chief George M. Stapleton nominated Mr. Gabliks for Vice Chairperson; the nomination was seconded, and all were in favor.

Chief Butler was officially sworn in by Chief Hoover.

**Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvements on the National Emergency Training Center Campus  
FY 2019 Budget/Budget Planning  
Mr. Al Fluman, Director, U.S. Fire Administration/National Emergency Training Center Management, Operations & Support Services Division**

Mr. Al Fluman reported that this is his sixth year collectively making improvements to the campus. He stated that over the last 15 years, the electric bill has been reduced to \$600,000 from \$2 million, when the campus was working with the Daughters of Charity to use steam. Mr. Fluman indicated there are currently four buildings using geothermal energy, and there are heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) and light emitting diode (LED) projects being completed. He indicated that the LED lighting is almost complete campus wide; Building M needs to be finished, and Building N still needs to be done. There is also enough money this year to complete the HVAC in Building H, and Building N should be completed in fiscal year (FY) 20. Mr. Fluman would eventually like to see no electric bill at all. He advised that there have been solar panels installed that heat and cool Building S. Solar panels have been installed on Buildings L, M and R. In FY 20, solar panels will be installed on Building S. Plans call for the installation of solar panels on Building J in FY 21.

Mr. Fluman said the second major area of improvement is that all trailers will soon be eliminated from campus. He stated there were 10 to 15 trailers previously on campus, and the only one left is at the main entrance. Mr. Fluman said the trailer will be removed as part of the updates being made at the main gate. The contract for that work will be awarded before the end of this month. This work will improve access onto campus. There will be one lane for staff and students with a badge, one lane for guests and delivery trucks, and one lane to leave campus. This work will start after the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. The main gate will be shut down for approximately six months. Mr. Fluman advised that during construction, the entrance onto campus will be moved to the south gate. He stated there is already a shelter there for the security guards, and all additional items needed by the guards will be moved there. Mr. Fluman indicated that the upgrades to the main entrance will include a visitor parking area and a new visitors center. The construction will require a couple of small trees to be removed, but all large trees will remain. There will be a badge reader installed for staff and students, the road will be widened to accommodate bus access, and there will be denial barriers placed in two locations. Mr. Fluman is

hopeful that these improvements will raise the security score from 70 to 80-85. He said all buildings would need to be equipped with a card reader in order to reach a score of 100, and that is not a current consideration.

Mr. Fluman stated he would pause here and answer any questions.

Chief Quinn asked if the denial barriers were going to be retractable. Mr. Fluman indicated that they will be flat.

Mr. Pantelis asked if badge processing will be moved. Mr. Fluman advised that individuals will turn right into the visitors center to receive a badge.

Dr. Onieal asked how many buildings are functioning off the solar panels. Mr. Fluman stated that Building I functions from the barn solar panels, and the solar panels on Building R will take care of Building J and Building R with surplus to extend to other buildings. Mr. Fluman explained that there is no definitive data at this time, but it should soon be available. He also advised that the solar panel installation will not cover 100% of the energy needed.

Mr. Steven P. Westermann asked if the drop in energy need was from solar alone or from geothermal as well. Mr. Fluman said they both played a part; however, he does not know how much each contributed as some of the improvements were made before he was in his current position.

Mr. Fluman continued his discussion on campus improvements and indicated that a new fire alarm system will be installed over the next three to four years. This project will be done building by building, with the hub being in Building V. Mr. Fluman said that Buildings G, M, O, R, S and the log cabin will be completed first.

Mr. Fluman said the roof of Building B and its overhang were replaced, but the overhang between Building B and Building C was not replaced. He stated that new asphalt will be put down in the area in front of Building N, which is adjacent to Building M and between Buildings G and J. Mr. Fluman stated that the basement of Building O was torn out with funds from FY 19 and will be remodeled with FY 20 funds. He also indicated that Building J basement renovations were started with FY 19 funding, and during FY 20, the renovations will proceed. The makeover includes office space for staff and classrooms for the arson program. Mr. Fluman said that in FY 21, Buildings D and F will be renovated. He explained that these buildings were initially designed to be dormitories. The buildings currently have staff on the first floors which will be moved to Building L and the Building O basement.

Mr. Fluman advised that there is a long-term plan, estimated for FY 23, to budget for a new building. It will be a two-story building placed in the exact footprint of the tennis court and will be the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Wellness Center. A drawing of the building will be available before planning of FY 23. The NETC Wellness Center will consist of a weight room, exercise equipment, mattress wrestling, an alternative to the pub, 60 dormitory rooms and possibly a classroom.

Mr. Fluman reported that the online admissions application process has been operating for about one month. EMI has used the online application to apply for residency, and the NFA will use it for the next enrollment period, open from October 15 to December 15 for April through September residency classes. The goal is to become completely paperless.

Dr. Onieal thanked Mr. Fluman and his staff for all their hard work. He said that work the Management, Operations and Support Services Division staff does can be challenging as it is all tied to the checkbook. He also indicated that their work is influenced by new technology and historic preservation guidelines — for example, the historic trees in the main entrance area. Mr. Fluman stated that currently, the FY 20 funding is still unknown; however, for Building J basement and Building L renovations, the funds are in the budget.

Mr. Pantelis commended the efforts being made to create a new recreation center and increase health and wellness awareness. He stated that the effort to focus on this is exceptional.

Mr. Gabliks asked if the additional dormitories are needed due to the current space running at capacity. Mr. Fluman said that the capacity is reviewed weekly, and the dorms are currently always overbooked. He explained that with the current projects, some dormitory space will be lost and some will be gained, but hopefully in the end there will be some extra dorms. Mr. Fluman explained that currently, dorms are overbooked by about 50 beds because it is known that cancellations will occur. Mr. Fluman also stated that current business volume supports the additional dormitory space. He is looking into expanding and filling the beds in every way possible. Dr. Onieal asked Mr. Fluman about the occupancy rating. Mr. Fluman said the average is 75%. Chief Hoover stated that additional classrooms and the availability of bed spaces will lead to additional class spaces and offerings. Mr. Fluman stated that contractors bid based on full capacity; therefore, he feels that money is being lost if we are not at capacity.

Chief Stapleton asked what the traditional cancellation rate is. Mr. Fluman advised he did not have the exact data with him; however, he stated that the NFA is very low and that EMI and FEMA training is high. Chief Hoover stated the campus needs to function like a college campus. She said there is starting to be more of an awareness that the campus is a place of higher education and training, not just a traditional one- to three-day training or seminar-type place. Chief Butler asked if there is enough data to predict cancellations that may be happening due to weather events, such as hurricanes. Mr. Fluman explained that FEMA tries to take weather into consideration by scheduling classes during the second and third quarters. Otherwise, the number of hurricanes as well as the landfalls differ so much that it is tough to predict. Dr. Onieal said EMI has been having a difficult time hiring a superintendent, and hopefully they will get one soon. He stated that EMI has no class schedule like the NFA and the classes are ad hoc. Due to the nature of the environment, a lot of times the EMI classes are scheduled and then cancelled due to things such as emergency deployments. Once EMI hires a superintendent, Dr. Onieal would like to have a discussion with the individual to set expectations. Chief Hoover stated that she would like to focus on using beds for NFA education and reducing the impact for campus use for FEMA internal training.

**National Fire Academy Activities**  
**Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, National Fire Academy**  
**National Fire Academy Staff**

Prior to the report of NFA activities, Chief Quinn motioned that, if possible, on behalf of the board, a letter can be sent to Ms. Gladhill to thank her for the years of dedication and hard work she provided. Mr. Pantelis responded that this will be done and does not require a motion to complete.

Chief Hoover discussed the vacant position due to Ms. Gladhill's retirement. She explained that two candidates were given offers but declined, and she is looking to fill this position in the next 30 days. Chief Hoover also indicated that Dr. Kiefer's position is open, along with a training specialist in the fire prevention area. She advised that there is currently a list of applicants, and the process has been started; however, this may take some time to ensure the best candidate is hired. Mr. Stephen Dean added that there will be open positions coming up for Administrative Support Assistants.

Mr. John Carnegis reported on the Managing Officer (MO) program. Mr. Carnegis stated that the program was envisioned to be a two-year program and is currently taking about three to three and a half years for students to complete. He indicated that, historically, there are about 200 applicants a year, and they carry over any good applicants. The April 15th enrollment period brought 189 applicants, of which 159 were accepted. Mr. Carnegis stated that the primary reason for nonacceptance was due to applicants not being a part of the target audience for this program, which are company-level officers. He also stated that several graduates have been promoted to chief-level officers and are making a difference. Dr. Patricia A. McIntosh asked what is being done if the education or course prerequisites requirement is not being met. Education requirements are clearly stated in the program guidance. Mr. Carnegis explained that when this happens, the applicant is advised that classes are offered here on campus, and they are referred back to the state/local level training. Mr. Gabliks stated that he wants to be sure the state level is doing their part and asked if there were any challenges with state delays. Mr. Carnegis said that the states have been supportive, and classes are offered on campus, so he is unsure of the reason for the prerequisite/education requirement not being met. He also said there has been an increase of support from the states over the last four years. Mr. Pantelis asked what the biggest obstacle for the program is. Mr. Carnegis stated that there are no major obstacles and indicated that some students find it difficult to get classes scheduled, but that directing them typically helps. Mr. Westermann asked if there is a measuring system in place. Mr. Carnegis explained that there is a quality assurance system in place, and three people attempted to purchase MO program plaques without even being enrolled in the program. In addition, several students submitted their completion packages with wrong prerequisite courses.

Mr. Carnegis talked about the EFO Program Symposium and indicated that Commissioner Adam Thiel will be the keynote speaker this year. He explained that a gradual transition has been started for the USFA/NFA to take over and get the symposium in alignment with the new EFO program. They will be looking at leadership and personnel in colleges, universities and other disciplines to speak. Mr. Carnegis advised that the agenda will be posted in January 2020. He said they are currently exploring breakout sessions and that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is coming to set up a display.

Mr. Carnegis explained that the EFO program has started assigning cohorts. Cohort A for the December group is complete, and 24 students have been assigned. He stated that the new EFO application will be electronic, and applicants will receive a hard copy of program information and journal expectations. Mr. Carnegis said the new application package has more elements to it that include the applicant's capabilities and leadership skills. This will allow progress measures to be put into place. There are currently 200 people waiting for acceptance into the program, and he added that those who have left the program did so due to life challenges and job position changes; none of them dropped out due to the program. Chief Butler asked what happens when you get to Cohort Z. Mr. Carnegis explained the cohort will tie to the FY; for example, Cohort A19.

Mr. Carnegis stated that a prerequisite class of research methodology is required before entering into the EFO program. Mr. Kevin Brame has a new class available online for this. Mr. Carnegis also advised that there was a walkthrough of the Residential 1 and Mediated 1 classes a couple weeks ago, and there were no major issues. He explained the remaining classes will be scheduled over the next couple of months. Mr. Carnegis said he believes one of the big success stories from these changes is that there will be an advisor to guide the student through the thesis process. He also stated there will be online recognition the same day upon graduation.

Chief Hoover commended Mr. Carnegis on getting things moving and keeping students informed about the EFO program changes. She also thanked Mr. Dean for being involved and upholding accountability measures by attending every meeting. Chief Hoover stated that this has been a fast-paced, adaptive change that has never been done at the academy before. She indicated it has taken under two years to get this up and moving, which is unheard of. Chief Hoover said the first cohort is the beta test/pilot. She stated that the staff involved has been going above and beyond. She envisions the MO program will be reviewed next, and something similar will be done.

Chief Quinn stated he was curious about the feedback from the students. Mr. Carnegis responded by explaining that an important element was that the training specialist realized the effects the changes have on both current and past students. He indicated there was not much of an effect on year 1 and year 2 students; year 3 students are looking forward to the changes as they believe some of the work was good, but defend that there will be better preparation in the coming years. Chief Butler said he has found that some individuals are not prepared to articulate; therefore, he was glad to hear this. Chief Quinn pulled up the website and asked when the updates will occur under the link to obtain more information, brochures and handbooks. Mr. Carnegis advised it will be updated once the new class starts. Chief Quinn expressed his concern of old information being displayed as he would like to ensure the new information is being given out. Mr. Carnegis advised that colleges and universities use that old link currently, and it must be kept for a short time. Chief Hoover added that she has heard concerns from past graduates regarding how they would be affected by the new program. She explained that her response is to describe the completion of the program as getting a degree; degree requirements change throughout a program and so will the curriculum. She states that this does not take away from what they have earned, and the recognition is just as important. Dr. McIntosh asked if there is concern that the program is less rigorous. Chief Hoover indicated that reducing the program from four to two years does not make it any easier; in fact, it is probably more intense. Dr. McIntosh asked what people have said about how the program fits into their current education. Chief Hoover said she defines this as community of practice, and it will compliment a master's degree. Mr. Carnegis added that some people have opted to start a

master's program to help with the writing of the thesis. Dr. McIntosh said she is eager to see the results in five years. Chief Hoover stated that colleges are looking at the program to see how they will grant some time and integrate credits.

Chief Butler stated that this is a large rollout, and this feedback to the committee is invaluable. He said that the constant communication being completed to market and network is important. For example, Chief Hoover explained during a conference that an increased level of activity with the students is being implemented due to the want for people to succeed. She stated the program is now at a 3.0 acceptance, not a 2.0, and there are students coming from all over that need to be supported through the 24-month process. She added that her instinct tells her that the academic support will help students.

Chief Butler stated that it might be a good idea to have a presentation with the Fire Service Executive Development Institute. He is afraid some folks will see this as an "apples to apples" thing, and it is not meant to be that way, so we need to squash that from within. Mr. Carnegis responded that this is a good thing to know.

Mr. Gabliks gave credit to the NFA staff for their internal work and the marketing of the program. He stated that he was receiving calls with concern that the program was being watered down; however, now that the word is getting out about the program, it is being embraced. Mr. Dean said that he was receiving emails from EFO graduates who have finished the program regarding the time commitment of the new EFO program. He stated that he explains the time commitment was tough, and what has been learned off campus is now being incorporated into the process. He also stated that current students are not looking at this being less time; instead they are looking at the level of work they need to do. Chief Stapleton asked if mentors will be available to current program students. Mr. Carnegis stated this will be visited at a later date due to the focus on the new program at this time; however, he would like to see it done.

Chief Hoover asked the board to assist with instructor selection and would like feedback from any members who can assist with the process. She indicated that the point of contact will be Mr. Carnegis. She also stated that the NFA will be available to assist with completing applications. Dr. Kiefer added that there is not fire service wording in the criteria. The words "advisor," "research" and "academic" are being used as this is being expanded to those not in the fire service, but in academia. Chief Hoover added that communication is communication, and we do not need a fire service member to teach it. Mr. Westermann asked if assistance is only needed in regard to communication. Chief Hoover explained that folks in all areas are always being sought.

Dr. Kiefer advised that Mr. Carnegis is representing four people, Richard Sexton, Mike Weller, Kevin Brame and himself, of whom all deserve credit for their dedication.

Mr. Dean reported that the arson program has been making changes at the arson lab down range. He explained that new buildings were installed to replace the old buildings that were 35 years old. The first burn with a new building will be in October. Mr. Dean reported that the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) area has two pilot classes starting. The first is a mediated class that started this week, and the other is a six-day resident class that will be held at the end of September. He stated that two EMS classes are currently being developed in-house. Mr. Dean also indicated that

the specialists who are involved in the EFO program revisions are not being used for other reviews; therefore, the other specialists are being heavily relied upon. He also explained that some EMS changes are on hold awaiting changes in government such as the Affordable Care Act. Chief Hoover asked Mr. Dean to review the American Council on Education (ACE) program. Mr. Dean advised that there should be over 50 courses reviewed yearly. He explained that courses should be reviewed every three years. Currently, the rate of review is about 25 to 30 per year. Mr. Gabliks asked if the EFO program will earn ACE credit recommendation. Mr. Dean advised that the program will be reviewed in increments as it is being processed. He also stated that there is work being done to ensure students are getting what they need while the program is in transition. Chief Hoover added that the students will not see the credits on their transcript until the program is complete, but credit is assigned as each course is completed. Mr. Dean stated that there have been no major obstacles at this time; however, they are working with ACE to ensure credits are given if the program is not completed, so it is currently unknown what that will look like.

Mr. Dean discussed the collaboration with EMI to ensure Building S simulation labs can be used when EMI classes are cancelled. Mr. Gabliks referred back to the fire arson program to ask if there has been an effect on volume due to the retiring baby boomers. Mr. Dean replied that there has been a lot of interest, and the ATF may add another person to the program; however, there will still be a limitation due to the build-out of the burn cells. Chief Hoover stated that there is space to add two burn cells and stated that Management Operations and Student Support has asked about the interest in building them. She explained that additional classroom space will also be needed. Mr. Dean said that alternate sites are being looked at to see if there are locations that will accommodate a class being set up, provided the ATF approves. He stated that there is incredible interest in fire investigation, and now there are live burns online due to technology.

Mr. Ken Farmer discussed the Distance Learning Program. The authority to operate (ATO) will expire December 2019. Mr. Farmer indicated that work to extend the ATO is continuing through discussions with FEMA so that it is understood the learning environment is now more than just books. He explained there is concern over using cyberspace, which is used for things such as webinars. Mr. Farmer said the use of the Distance to Learn (D2L) system is expanding, with FEMA approval, due to the system's minimal risk. He also indicated that work is being completed with FEMA to find out the requirements and what is allowed in order to get their approval to use Dropbox. Mr. Farmer stated that Wi-Fi is being reviewed to ensure the current system can be used for increased web pages, videos, etc. He also indicated that the fire alarm has a dedicated Wi-Fi, separate from the learning system. Mr. Farmer said the Department of Defense (DoD) is going through the same dynamics with the learning system being separated. Mr. Gabliks asked what systems other affiliates are currently using. Fletch, Moodle and homegrown systems were among those mentioned; however, they are either not compatible with the current learning management system and/or there are concerns such as encrypted links and security. The challenge is using a government system for external users. There are also compliance issues being worked on for the use of videos, YouTube, etc., as the copyright is lost when these items are turned over to the state.

Mr. Farmer stated that education is currently being administered online through self-study, through mediated and residential classes, and now by blended methods. He said the blended methods have been working well and are being used by other areas in addition to the EFO program. Mr. Farmer reported that there are currently no major impacts in the self-study area. There is a new research

design class, and the initial fire investigation class is being reviewed. He said that there are eight mediated platforms in development and three new ones being developed, and the EFO program is making this work very important. He also stated that the D2L Brightspace product has two more years left, and replacement products are being examined.

Mr. Farmer said that video versions for the Coffee Break Bulletins are also being looked into. Mr. Farmer reported that there are 18 state weekends and the upcoming national weekend, which is open to all states, at the end of September. He stated that there are 118 Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE)-approved programs. In FY 18 there were approximately 65,000 students who completed courses through NFA-sponsored off-campus programs (off-campus, online, mediated and FESHE Recognition courses) in their state:

- NFA off-campus two-day courses: In cooperation with state and metro training agencies, the NFA sponsors off-campus courses to volunteer and career fire service personnel through the state fire training systems. NFA brings the class to the students by providing the instructors and course materials. Course dates and locations are determined by the state fire service training director.
- NFA Online self study: These classes are designed to stand alone, which allows students to take them at any time of their choosing. These are self-directed classes and are not led by an instructor.
- NFA Online Mediated: These classes are designed to be taken during a scheduled period of time. Classes are facilitated by an instructor, which allows students to be led and guided in the class. Most classes are between four and six weeks in length.
- FESHE Recognition: A FESHE Recognition certificate is an acknowledgment that a collegiate emergency services degree program meets the minimum standards of excellence established by FESHE professional development committees and the NFA.

He indicated that there is a new position open to help with mediated training due to staff changes. Chief Hoover stated that she is looking forward to the National Professional Symposium planning meeting to be sure all needs are being met. Mr. Gabliks expressed his concern with emergency managers permitting the fire service to qualify instructors for ICS 300/400. He indicated that the relationship the state emergency managers have with EMI differs from the relationship that state training directors have with the NFA. Chief Hoover advised that the state, local, tribal and territorial governments help with that. She also indicated that FEMA is trying to set up its own training environment. Mr. Thomas E. Romaine mentioned that there are differences between the NFA and EMI. Chief Hoover reached out to EMI for additional information for the board. Mr. Gabliks stated that people do not know the difference between the FEMA, USFA and NFA divisions and who is ultimately responsible for approving the pieces in the learning environment.

## **Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Reports**

### **National Fire Incident Reporting System Chief George Stapleton, Chairperson**

Chief Stapleton advised that there was nothing to report.

**Professional Development Initiative  
Dr. Patricia McIntosh, Chairperson**

Dr. McIntosh reported that the professional development initiative (PDI) is on hiatus. She explained that in years past, information was shared at the symposium; however, the meeting is not for a couple of weeks (September 21 and 22), so there is currently nothing to report. Mr. Gabliks asked to have inclusion discussed so we do not lose sight of it. Dr. Kiefer indicated that he would like the approach to be about the next step forward to collaborate. Mr. Gabliks stated that he would like to see that energy as high as it is for the EFO program.

**USFA Data Research and Response Support Initiatives  
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire Programs**

Chief Richard Patrick asked Mr. Bill Troup to report on the National Fire Data Center and Research. Mr. Troup reported that the first delivery of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Enterprise Data Warehouse class was successfully completed through partnership with the NFA. There has been great feedback from the first class's audience of state-level points of contact. There is a second class targeted for mid-November that will be offered to NFIRS managers. Mr. Troup stated that the data warehouse replaces the old sort tool and helps manage data better. He said the current plan is to get the state level up to date and then reach out to metro areas. Mr. Troup advised that hiring will occur for another NFIRS position and asked the board to assist. He indicated that the individual will assist in creating reports that will be more effective to the fire service instead of the researchers that use the data. He added that the position will also coordinate with law firms and lawyers on the data being used by them. Chief Butler asked if the position will be more customer based than analytical. Mr. Troup confirmed that the position will be project/process/customer-service oriented. He said one focus will be on looking to see what NFIRS data and reports can do for the board. He would like someone familiar with NFIRS that can work with fire departments to help them understand the data and how it can help assist fire chiefs.

Mr. Troup reported that around 24,000 departments have reported 28 million incidents so far this year. There are approximately five to six thousand departments that do not participate. Chief Patrick indicated that there is a record that shows the departments and areas that do not participate. He would like to obtain partnerships and get everyone to participate. Mr. Troup stated that the detailed statistical reports have saved lots of money for law firms, that there is a larger audience than just the fire service, and that it is critical to have this program. He explained that there is a lot of time spent on information technology (IT) procurements and certifications with the federal government because NFIRS is a federal IT system, supported by the federal government systems. Mr. Troup was trying to educate that the current funding is only a portion of what is needed to maintain and run the NFIRS. Chief Patrick advised that tight security requirements are mandated on them, just like all other federal systems.

Mr. Troup reported on several projects such as updating the 20-year-old report on risk management in the fire department, creating a document that targets safety in the fire station, partnering with the school of public health in regard to EMS assaults, and educating local governments of the

importance to assist with the funding of voluntary fire departments. The following list of research initiatives was provided:

- Update USFA report on Funding Alternatives for Emergency Medical and Fire Services.
- Emergency Vehicle Lighting Study.
- EMS Responder Safety Study.
- NFIRS Outreach.
- Continuation of partnership with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health on the study of cancer among firefighters.
- A potential study of the American fire problem based on “America Burning.”
- A soon to be released report on the study of emergency services ergonomics and wellness.
- Upcoming release of USFA Firefighter Fatalities in the United States 2018 report.
- Update of the USFA report, “Fire in the U.S.”

Mr. Gabliks asked if there are specific areas not participating with NFIRS. Chief Patrick advised that there is not a specific area, but more are rural.

Chief Butler asked if the safety in the fire station research would include any concentration on those that die but are not killed. Mr. Troup explained that those deaths are more medical in nature and that is not a target area. He explained that there are other organizations working on the medical side.

Chief Patrick added to what Mr. Troup covered by informing the board about a contract with the International Association of Fire Chiefs to make a concerted effort to inform the fire service what NFIRS is and what it is not. He also advised that, based on his experience, fire service members speak mainly about software problems and not the actual NFIRS, and he looks to engage software vendors to enhance the utility of NFIRS. For example, the National EMS Information System is updated almost yearly, and software programs are built into vendor budgets to keep it up to date.

Mr. Gabliks asked about measures to ensure work is not being duplicated and efforts are in sync among organizations. Chief Patrick advised that an internal risk assessment is performed to ensure the right things are being done. He explained that two staff positions were being combined in order to make the opening Mr. Troup spoke about. He also stated that there is collaboration with the FEMA grant program and USFA that specifically focuses on assuring things are not being duplicated. Mr. Gabliks asked how work is translated to students on campus and put into the course curriculum. Chief Patrick advised that he and Chief Hoover work together to make this happen. Chief Hoover added that the instructor specialists are to be doing this on a regular basis. Mr. Westermann asked if the three currently open positions are part of the two that were merged. Chief Patrick advised that those positions were in addition to the one he referred to.

Chief Stapleton asked if there is a need to get the inactive NFIRS subcommittee back up and running for support. Dr. Kiefer advised that this would be a question for Dr. Onieal. Chief Patrick indicated that everything at the USFA depends on NFIRS data, and he recommends keeping the subcommittee alive for that reason. Mr. Gabliks stated that Mr. Troup and Chief Patrick can provide more information and training than time allows, so maybe the subcommittee can staff up a group meeting to figure out what can be done to bolster the program and staffing. Chief Butler

was appointed as co-chair for the NFIRS subcommittee, and Chief Quinn will be the vice chair of PDI to assist Dr. McIntosh. Chief Quinn asked if the committee should be involved in developments. Chief Hoover responded to have that addressed in the strategic meeting. Mr. Gabliks asked if there is a research component on how to share information. Chief Hoover advised that the symposium attendance should be built up to show people information they are not normally getting. Mr. Gabliks stated that FESHE may love to hear some of the efforts going on.

Chief Patrick spoke about DHS Science and Technology (S&T). He indicated that several staff members serve on the First Responder Resource Group (FRRG), and that Mr. Troup was recognized early this year for his dedicated commitment and support to the FRRG efforts. Chief Patrick stated the WUI Technology Briefing will be held on campus November 13-14. Day one will consist of a breakdown of the S&T report and how it is divided into seven buckets. On day two, there will be breakout sessions to obtain additional insight from stakeholders and engage them in what they can do with the report information. He indicated there were 48 gaps identified and placed into the seven buckets, and stated that most of the technology already exist to close the gaps. Mr. Westermann asked how much of this technology was military. Chief Patrick explained that a good percentage is military; however, there are S&T connections with the DoD to address these gaps, and some solutions may only be a phone call away.

Chief Patrick stated that the USFA is currently partnered with the Department of Homeland Security S&T on a “wearable” initiative to reduce firefighter morbidity and mortality from cardiac events. This device would be a personal device, such as a Fitbit or Apple watch, that is specific to the fire service and not tied to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act regulations. The device would detect ST elevation in a heart rhythm, which is an indicator of cardiac events, and it would be up to the individual what to do with the results.

## **Classroom Visits**

Prior to the classroom visit reports, the staff and public were asked if there were any comments or anything else that needed to be discussed. The meeting dates for 2020 were set as follows:

- December 18, 2019, 9:30-11:30 a.m. EST by teleconference.
- March 5, 2020, 1-3 p.m. EST by teleconference.
- August 31 - September 1, 2020, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST in person, in room H-300 at the NFA.

Chief Quinn reported that he received positive feedback from the Executive Development class. The only question was if there was a similar program for life and safety. He indicated that students were looking for guidance on this topic.

Chief Stapleton stated students discussed the differences between the NFA and EMI application processes. He asked if the NFA was updating the process to be more similar to EMS. Chief Stapleton said there was also some discussion regarding the sprinkler lab that used to be on campus. Dr. Kiefer explained that it was not representing new systems and was expensive to maintain. He also stated that it was a safety concern, and since there are mobile sprinkler labs available and a lot of manufacturers’ information online, it was eliminated. Chief Stapleton

reported that students asked about future classes for fire service data analysis. Dr. Kiefer explained that per the discussion earlier with Chief Patrick, it is open for discussion.

Dr. McIntosh reported that MO program students stated that the prerequisite courses are hard to get locally. Dr. Kiefer stated that these courses are offered by the NFA as off-campus deliveries. Dr. McIntosh stated that one student expressed concern over the six-day course instead of two-day classes. Dr. McIntosh reported that students appreciate the networking opportunity the campus allows. She also received complaints about twin beds being in the dorms. Dr. Kiefer explained that double beds were put into the dorms where space could accommodate them. Students also brought up concerns regarding the awareness of the NFA. Chief Hoover advised the awareness should be coming at the local level and the states should be ensuring that it is pushed down. Mr. Gabliks mentioned that there is marketing, and Dr. McIntosh stated that social media may be an opportunity to increase awareness. Regarding outreach to volunteers, Dr. Kiefer advised that every course used to be two weeks but now we have one week courses that are available to all members of the fire service. Dr. McIntosh stated that students advised that transcripts are hard to obtain; however, the students were generally enthusiastic and spoke highly of classes being based on discussion and not death by PowerPoint. Chief Butler stated that he was with Dr. McIntosh in her classes, and it was enlightening to see how she handled things. Dr. McIntosh recommended a script for going into classrooms to create consistency.

Mr. Gabliks indicated that he and Mr. Romaine talked about the Board of Visitors and the EFO program changes. He stated that the instructors sliced up exercises and were teaching to a diverse group of students. Students indicated they were unsure about strategies as that is normally the responsibility of the Incident Commander. Mr. Gabliks explained that until the commander arrives on-scene, someone needs to handle the job duty. Mr. Gabliks stated that the overall student feedback was positive. Mr. Romaine indicated that most of the students he spoke with were new to the campus. A lot of them had questions about the EFO program, and he encouraged them to check into it. He also said that he spoke with an experienced fire investigator in the cafeteria who was surprised at the varied levels of other students, but how they were all getting a lot out of the class. Dr. McIntosh stated that she believes the EFO program is doing a nice job promoting the idea that you do not have to be a fire chief for admission into the program. Dr. Kiefer added that this program is applicable to EMS, dispatch and communication personnel. Mr. Gabliks stated that individuals should be able to work with a diverse audience, and Mr. Romaine added that the growth of career firefighters is high, and the EFO program should complement this.

Chief Butler reported that he sat in the back of a classroom to observe. He said there was no verbal discussion. He felt there was a healthy function going on in the class that he did not want to interrupt. He indicated that the involvement on day one was impressive.

Mr. Gabliks asked if there was any more business to discuss, and the Board of Visitors responded no. The meeting was closed. The next teleconference meeting will be December 18, 2019, at 9:30 a.m. EST.