

CAREER STRATEGIES

An Ocean Of Opportunity In The Merchant Marine

(NAPSA)—Men and women searching for a career in a growth industry may want to set sail for the Merchant Marine.

Not only is the industry growing, but it's also possible to get free training and a guaranteed first job.

The federal government's Maritime Security Program has sparked an increase in the number of ships flying the U.S. flag—and a need for more merchant mariners. Under the program, the government contracts with the owners of commercial ships for service when needed.

These U.S.-flag merchant ships are crewed by American seafarers. This approach avoids the need to spend billions of dollars to acquire additional cargo ships dedicated solely to carrying military cargoes, and the millions of additional dollars required to maintain more standby vessels. The number of ships in the Maritime Security Program fleet is projected to grow from 47 to 60.

Overall, the industry offers seafarers a wide range of opportunities, partly because there are so many different types of vessels. As employees working under contracts between maritime companies and the Seafarers International Union, merchant mariners have opportunities for employment aboard all types of vessels, including deep-sea cargo vessels, tankers, military support ships, Great Lakes vessels, cable ships, tugboats, passenger ferries and more.

A union-affiliated school, the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education offers an apprentice program that blends hands-on training with classroom



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instruction. It consists of three phases, including 90 days aboard a U.S.-flag ship. That particular phase has helped boost the industry's retention rate—approximately 75 percent of students who complete the entire unlicensed apprentice program are still sailing four years later.

The school offers the most U.S. Coast Guard-approved courses of any maritime school in the nation—from entry level to license preparation to academic support.

Students at the southern Maryland school may also receive college credit recommendations for successfully completing certain sanctioned courses. In addition, all students who successfully complete the program are guaranteed a first job with "B" seniority.

Based in Piney Point, Md., the school's training tools include bridge and engine simulators, the Joseph Sacco Fire Fighting and Safety School and a culinary lab.

To learn more about the merchant marine, visit the Web site at www.seafarers.org.