

U.S. Coast Guard Academy Experiences

Interviewees:

- Lieutenant Andrew Ellis attended the Coast Guard Academy from 2011 to 2015.
 - [USCG Lieutenant Andrew Ellis Transcript.pdf](#)
 - Lieutenant Commander Christine Igisomar attended the Coast Guard Academy from 2004 to 2008.
 - [USCG Lieutenant Commander Christine Igisomar Transcript.pdf](#)
 - Former Instructor Pilot Mara Langevin attended the Coast Guard Academy from 1987 to 1991.
 - [USCG Fmr Instructor Pilot Mara Huling Langevin Transcript.pdf](#)
 - Captain Eva Van Camp attended the Coast Guard Academy from 1993 to 1997.
 - [USCG Captain Eva Van Camp Transcript.pdf](#)
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Karen Lau

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What was more challenging, business school or Swab Summer?

Lieutenant Andrew Ellis

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So, a little bit different shifting to the student life again and being a business student, so they're different. I don't know if I can compare the two. Additionally, I was in different stages of my life. Graduating high school and going to Swab Summer ... I'm not sure if I was fully ready to take on life as an adult. It was definitely stressful to go through Swab Summer and have people yell at you and ... they're breaking you down to build you back up. It was a lot of strain on my body, a lot of strain on my mind, but I don't know if it was necessarily hard. It was a challenge. It just was one of those hurdles I knew I needed to cross. With business school on the other hand, I was already so motivated to get to where I was. I've done three afloat tours prior to that and I was ready to go back to the classroom. While the classes were certainly challenging ... business school definitely got me thinking and it was more of a mental stress, but I think the Coast Guard did a very good job of preparing me for both. Even without the experience going into Swab Summer ... I think by the time I was ready for grad school, I had already dealt with a lot of stress from being afloat and dealing with other business interactions in the Coast Guard that I would feel pretty prepared as well. Which was more challenging? Swab Summer, just because I was a little younger, a little bit [less experienced].

Karen Lau

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What motivated you to attend the Naval Academy Preparatory School and the Coast Guard Academy? What were your experiences as a cadet at the Academy like?

Lieutenant Commander Christine Igisomar

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The way one gets into the Naval Academy Prep School is you first have to apply to the Coast Guard Academy and when they see that you have officer potential, but they feel like you need a little bit of work in some areas of your academics or your physical fitness ... to make sure that you're ready for the academic rigor of the Coast Guard Academy, they offer you the Prep School. I was offered the Naval Academy Preparatory School in Newport, Rhode Island. It was a year well-spent. I made friends, I got to experience college-level math and science, and really prepared myself for what was going to come at the Academy. [During] my Academy experience, I found a core group of friends that I still am close friends with to this day. I felt that the Coast Guard Academy, having been a quarter of the size of the other service academies, allowed us to be a lot closer with our classmates because we were only about 250 strong when we graduated. The academy was so busy. From 6:00 a.m. in the morning to 10:00 p.m. at night, you were always doing something, whether it was class, sports, meetings for extracurricular activities, [or] homework.

Karen Lau

[00:07:55]

What was the hardest part of the military lifestyle for you to adapt to? I've heard so many horror stories about Swab Summer. Could you tell me about that?

Former Instructor Pilot Mara Langevin

[00:08:04]

For me, there were a couple of things that were really difficult. One was being in an environment that was mostly male dominated. So, in our class, we were like ten percent female and all the female cadets were kind of stuck in the same room together. So, I think there were like four of us in one room. First of all, it's summer and the rest of the male cadets, fourth class cadets, were just two in a room. [A challenge other than] being in this male-dominated culture ... for four years [was] time management, managing your time because you have to balance your schoolwork with your military education, like your military indoctrination. If you wanted to do sports, which I decided to do, you had very little time to juggle. I'm sure regular colleges are very similar with sports and academics, but then throw in another aspect of your military indoctrination and education, waking up at reveille, going to bed at Taps, certain times of the day, meals at set times, and managing all that together. The time management piece was really a hard thing to do initially.

Karen Lau

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Could you tell me about your experience as a cadet at the Academy?

Captain Eva Van Camp

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I had to go to NAPS first, so I graduated from high school and went to the Naval Academy Prep School in Newport, RI. I was there for a year and then went into the Academy. I had an adventurous time at the Academy. I had a lot of great summer programs where we went out and experienced the field. I went through the academic rigors and the military rigors at the Academy, and it was okay. I will say it was a lot different back then as a female [cadet] at the Coast Guard Academy. It's gotten a lot better. If somebody would ask me a few years ago if I would have my daughter go to the Academy, I'd probably say "no." But now things have gotten a lot better since I went through 20-plus years ago, so I would definitely not encourage her because I wanted to choose where she wants to go on her own, but I'll show her different opportunities. I made some really good friends at the Academy when I graduated. I came out and I've had a great career. I still keep in touch with a couple of my best friends. We're coming up on our 25th reunion back at the Academy this year, so it's pretty exciting.