

CAL POLY MARITIME ACADEMY

Where hands-on learning meets high-impact careers

Located at our scenic waterfront Cal Poly Solano Campus in Vallejo, California, Cal Poly Maritime Academy is the only maritime academy on the West Coast that grants a U.S. Merchant Mariner license. With our Learn by Doing approach, students gain hands-on experience and build strong leadership skills to succeed in their careers and beyond.

On land, at sea and around the world

Choosing the right maritime university means finding a place that equips you with the skills, training and experience to lead in one of the world's most essential industries. As the only dedicated maritime academy on the West Coast, Cal Poly Maritime Academy offers a powerful combination of Learn by Doing, industry access and a close-knit campus community. Here's what sets us apart—and how to take the first step.

Real-World Impact

From day one, you'll begin building the skills to take on the maritime industry's toughest challenges. Whether you're training aboard the Golden Bear, working in simulators, conducting research or leading teams, you'll gain real experience with real stakes. At Cal Poly Maritime Academy, we prepare graduates to lead—and to make an immediate difference in a global industry.

Shared Journeys, Lifelong Bonds

Whether in the classroom, at sea or on shore, you'll be part of a tight-knit community that values leadership, curiosity and connection. You'll build lasting friendships, learn from diverse perspectives and discover passions that shape your path—personally and professionally. Welcome to the Cal Poly Maritime Academy community.

Return on Investment

Cal Poly Maritime Academy leads the CSU system in job placement, with graduates earning some of the highest starting salaries in the region. Federal data ranks our alumni among the top-paid in the western United States.

Undergraduate Programs

- Business Administration, BS (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/business/undergraduate/business-administration-bs/>)
- International Strategy & Security, BA (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/philosophy/international-strategy-security-ba/>)
- Facilities Engineering Technology, BS (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/engineering/facilities-engineering-technology-bs/>)
- Marine Engineering Technology, BS (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/engineering/marine-engineering-technology-bs/>)
- Marine Transportation, BS (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/agriculture-food-environmental-sciences/marine-transportation-bs/>)
- Mechanical Engineering, BS (Solano Campus) (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/engineering/mechanical-engineering-bs-solano/>)
- Oceanography, BS (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/science-mathematics/oceanography-bs/>)

Undergraduate Minor

- International Strategy and Security Minor (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/liberal-arts/philosophy/international-strategy-security-minor/>)
- Naval Science Minor (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/agriculture-food-environmental-sciences/naval-science-minor/>)

Graduate Programs

- Transportation and Engineering Management, MS (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/engineering/transportation-engineering-management-ms/>)

Graduate Certificate

- Emergency Management (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/engineering/emergency-management-certificate/>)

Additional Programs

Military Opportunities

There is no armed service obligation requirement to graduate from the Cal Maritime. However, several military options are available that can offer financial aid and additional career opportunities.

U.S. Navy - Strategic Sealift Midshipmen Program (SSMP)

The Naval Science Department prepares students to participate in the Strategic Sealift Midshipmen Program (SSMP), a joint program established in 1925 between the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Merchant Marine. This is a program unique to maritime schools. It allows students who have earned U.S. Coast Guard licenses as merchant marine deck or engine officers to be commissioned as Ensigns in the Naval Reserve upon graduation. SSOs normally serve on inactive duty in the Individual Ready Reserve Group, allowing them to work as civilians in the maritime industry without the monthly drill requirement. They are called to serve on active duty when required to support major military sealift operations that call for the training and experience of licensed merchant marine officers. The program also offers the option to pursue an active duty commission upon graduation as an unrestricted line officer.

Eligibility

To participate in the SSMP, students must meet the following qualifications:

- be no older than 42 years by December 31 of commissioning year, waived to 45 years for prior military service
- pass a Department of Defense physical examination
- pass a semi-annual physical readiness test
- be enrolled in a degree program with a U.S. Coast Guard license option
- be in good academic standing, with a GPA of 2.5 or better

Students will be offered the opportunity to join the SSMP in their first year at Cal Poly Maritime. Applications will be reviewed by the Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Naval Science. Successful applicants will receive appointments as Midshipmen, U.S. Navy Reserve.

Benefits

Midshipmen between the ages of 17 and 42 are eligible to receive a Student Incentive Payment each semester (\$64,000 total distributed over four years) from the Federal Maritime Administration (MARAD).

Program Requirements

Midshipmen (SSO students) meet for weekly leadership and physical training sessions at Cal Poly Maritime, and take additional Naval Science classes. Specifically, midshipmen must complete the following courses:

- NSC 1100 Naval Science for the Merchant Marine Officer
- NSC 2200 Naval Science II for the Strategic Sealift Officer
- NSC 4400 Leadership Ethics and Naval Science for Merchant Marine Reservist II
- NSC 4450 Advanced Midshipman Naval Training

Obligation

Upon graduation, midshipmen are commissioned as Ensigns in the U.S. Navy Reserve. They are obligated to maintain their Coast Guard license and participate in the Navy Reserve for eight years, during which time they will perform two weeks of active duty per year. In addition, they are required to maintain employment in the maritime industry for three years.

Contact Information

Contact the Strategic Sealift Office in the Student Services Building for more information at Cal Poly Maritime Academy.

Further information may also be found at <https://www.navyreserve.navy.mil/Resources/SSO-Tool-Kit/>

Officer in Charge

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The Edwards Leadership Development Program

The Edwards Leadership Development Program (ELDP) is a collaborative effort between Academic Affairs, Cadet Leadership & Development, and Student Affairs. Made possible through the generosity of Tom and Libby Edwards, ELDP is designed to educate and train students and cadets at the Cal Poly Solano campus to become strong, effective leaders.

ELDP integrates experiential learning with academic coursework, drawing inspiration from the Outward Bound and National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) models. It emphasizes outdoor expeditions, progressive leadership training, and peer mentorship to create a unified and holistic leadership development experience.

In alignment with the donors' intent, key leadership skills are now embedded across several academic courses, ensuring that students and cadets develop the capabilities needed to succeed in their professional careers, where well-trained and proven leaders are in high demand. To further prepare students and cadets for real-world success, ELDP also incorporates professionalism training through etiquette dinners, networking simulations, and industry engagement opportunities. These experiences help participants practice and refine the interpersonal and professional skills essential for thriving in formal business and leadership environments.

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Corps of Cadets

Corps of Cadets is what sets Cal Poly Maritime Academy apart from most other colleges and universities in the United States. Every Cal Poly Maritime Academy student at the Cal Poly Solano Campus has an opportunity to be a cadet in the Corps of Cadets. The Corps of Cadets is a structured program focused on developing leadership and professionalism designed to enhance the character and abilities of each student.

The Academy provides a strong academic foundation and a supportive structure for personal growth. Cadets are expected to meet high standards of conduct, pursue academic excellence, and follow rules that build accountability, responsibility, and self-discipline.

The principles of honor, integrity, and loyalty, which have long defined the professional merchant marine officer, are central to the cadet experience. The Academy's rigorous expectations prepare graduates for success in a wide range of high-demand careers.

The Corps functions as the most visible mechanism for the delivery of the widest range of direct leadership experience opportunities on campus. All Corps members develop positive and desirable leadership traits, such as bearing, discipline, reliability, responsibility, selflessness, and tact. Much is asked of every cadet at Cal Poly Maritime Academy, and the development of self-discipline is critical to the success of each member in the Corps.

The Corps is led by approximately 20 cadet leaders appointed by the Office of Cadet Leadership & Development (CLD) through a rigorous interview and evaluation process. The Corps Commander is the highest ranking cadet and works closely with CLD and the Corps Leadership Team to foster

Pride, Teamwork, Professionalism and Self-Discipline. Every new cadet is placed in a division upon entry into Cal Poly Maritime Academy. Division Commanders work closely with all cadets in fostering community, divisional pride and adherence to high standards.

Corps of Cadets Membership

Beginning with the start of the Fall 2024 semester, Cal Maritime began offering two distinct pathways, or academic experiences, for eligible students, like programs offered at several other state maritime academies. The two pathways are a Corps of Cadets program and a traditional student path outside of the Corps of Cadets. In line with federal regulations and several degree program accreditation requirements, students in select programs are required to be members of the Corps of Cadets. In such cases, the traditional student experience path is not an option for those in some degree programs.

In accordance with federal regulations, students under instruction or berthed aboard the training ship are members of Cal Poly Maritime Academy's Corps of Cadets. In line with accreditation body (ABET) requirements for Engineering, students in Facilities Engineering Technology and non-license track Mechanical Engineering programs must participate in the corps for a portion of their degree program. Once these curricular requirements are fulfilled, students may elect to withdraw from the Corps.

CORPS OF CADETS - MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED FOR LICENSE TRACK

Students seeking to pursue a U.S. Coast Guard license must be a cadet in the Corps of Cadets. Students who pursue a USCG license will be qualified to work onboard commercial vessels once they are licensed. Additionally, there are certain academic programs (<https://maritime-archive.calpoly.edu/academics/majors.html>) at Cal Poly Maritime Academy that require membership in the Corps of Cadets for a portion of the degree program.

In addition to following established rules and regulations and participating in all Corps of Cadets activities during the school year, cadets will also participate in Summer Sea Terms (<https://maritime-archive.calpoly.edu/tsgb-summer-sea-term/>) aboard the training ship.

OPT-IN CORPS OF CADETS - LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS

Students enrolled in degree programs which do not require them to be a member of the Corps of Cadets, yet those who seek the lifestyle and leadership training that the Corps of Cadets offers may choose to opt-in to the Corps of Cadets. Students who opt-in will be required to abide by cadet rules and regulations, including wearing a uniform and participating in all required Corps of Cadets activities.

Rather than participate in the Summer Sea Term aboard the training ship, these cadets will participate in International Experience, internships, and co-ops as outlined in their degree program.

Students interested in Opting-In should email Office_CLD@csum.edu.

Office of Cadet Leadership & Development

The Office of Cadet Leadership & Development (CLD) is responsible for overseeing the Corps of Cadets. It is involved in many of the day-to-day activities of the Corps, including training Corps Leaders, and providing opportunities focused on developing leadership and professionalism to all cadets.

You can find our office in Morrow Cove.

Watchstanding

Watchstanding is an important element of leadership development and is essential for each cadet's future success, whether at sea or ashore. Cadets stand watch either on the **Training Ship GOLDEN BEAR** or on campus. As they develop their skills, cadets are placed in positions of increasing levels of responsibility. As their knowledge grows, they oversee and direct the actions of others during periods of watch.

Watches are scheduled in 4-hour blocks from 1600 – 0800 the next every day including weekends. Watches provide important learning experiences for cadets, and they also assist Cal Poly Maritime Academy in providing a high level of security and safety, both on campus and the ship.

Corps of Cadets Rules & Regulations

Another important element of leadership development is standards of conduct. All cadets are subject to rules and regulations that characterize the objectives set forth in the development of their leadership and professional skills. Cal Maritime's conduct and discipline system is a vehicle for assessing a cadet's aptitude for becoming a respected working professional.

The goal of the conduct system is to develop and reward positive personal characteristics and to modify incorrect behavior. Cadets receive demerits for inappropriate behavior and, those with excessive demerits, may be required to serve extra duty on weekends or evenings. Cadets who commit egregious breaches of conduct or who have consistent conduct problems may be subject to extra duty, probation, suspension or dismissal.

Cadets are required to wear uniforms to all academic functions and formations, and while standing watch. Uniform and grooming inspections are conducted for all members of the corps regularly.

Regulations also exist that forbid cheating, plagiarism, alcohol consumption, use of illegal drugs, theft, hazing and other conduct considered unbecoming of a member of the Corps.

The Corps of Cadets Rules & Regulations is provided to all cadets via a Canvas course and requires each cadet to acknowledge their receiving and understanding of the expectations.

Drug Testing

Cal Poly Maritime Academy, as prescribed by federal regulations, randomly administers drug tests to all cadets. Testing may also occur for reasonable cause, pre-employment, USCG licensing physical exams, follow-up testing, and for any marine casualty, accident, or serious incident. Additional testing for alcohol may also be undertaken during the training cruise.

Policy on Use of Alcohol and Drugs

In compliance with the federal Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989, Cal Poly Maritime Academy prohibits the unlawful possession, use, sale, or distribution of alcohol and illegal drugs by cadets, faculty, and staff on its property, training vessels, or as part of any academy-sponsored activities.

This prohibition extends to any off-campus activities that are sponsored by the institution or any of its recognized clubs and organizations.

Cadets-in-training for a U.S. Coast Guard license are subject to additional federal regulations regarding alcohol and drug use and are also required to participate in Cal Poly Maritime Academy's random drug testing program.

For more information regarding these regulations and the standards of conduct, please refer to the Corps of Cadets Rules & Regulations.

U.S. Coast Guard License Examination

The U.S. Coast Guard will issue a license as Third Mate Unlimited or Third Assistant Engineer Unlimited to license-track graduates of Cal Maritime who:

- are U.S. citizens
- complete the baccalaureate program
- meet the standards established by the U.S. Coast Guard, and
- pass the license examination

To be eligible to take the license examination, a student must:

- apply to the U.S. Coast Guard to sit for the license exam in the last semester of attendance
- pay appropriate U.S. Coast Guard fees, and
- complete all Cal Maritime STCW/USCG license requirements

Admission into programs leading to licensure and credentialing does not guarantee that students will obtain a license or credential. Licensure and credentialing requirements are set by agencies that are not controlled by or affiliated with the CSU and requirements can change at any time. For example, licensure or credentialing requirements can include evidence of the right to work in the United States (e.g., social security number or tax payer identification number), maintaining academic and conduct eligibility for Cadet status, meeting USCG medical requirements or successfully passing a criminal background check. Students are responsible for determining whether they can meet licensure or credentialing requirements. The CSU will not refund tuition, fees, or any associated costs, to students who determine subsequent to admission that they cannot meet licensure or credentialing requirements. Information concerning licensure and credentialing requirements are available from the Licensing Programs Office.

Sea Training Requirements

Three training cruises, established by the U.S. Coast Guard, are required of all students seeking a license as Third Mate or Third Assistant Engineer. During these training periods, referred to as summer sea term, students put the skills and knowledge they have been taught in the classroom to the ultimate test - actual practice. The entire operation of the Training Ship *Golden Bear* is performed by students, with licensed faculty officers acting in an advisory capacity. First-year students do the more elementary tasks, while third-year students perform all the duties of ship officers.

The sea training is designed to comply with the International Maritime Organization's Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping of Seafarers, 1978, as amended. Additionally, the sea training is designed to provide all students with an understanding of the maritime industry and the requirements of living in a ship environment.

The sea terms will be accomplished in the following order on the following vessels: training ship, commercial ship, and training ship. This program is part of the academic curriculum and carries credit for graduation.

Transfers from other state maritime academies or the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy will be evaluated on a case by case basis for completion of Cal Maritime's approved program, including sea time equivalency.

Military, merchant mariner sea time external to Cal Maritime's approved program, and volunteer/observer sea time may not be used in meeting the sea service requirements.

A student's major will normally determine the type of sea training. The required amount of sea training for each major is as follows:

- Business Administration - international experience
- Facilities Engineering Technology - one sea training experience as an engineering student

- International Strategy and Security - international experience
- Marine Engineering Technology - three sea training experiences as an engineering student
- Marine Transportation - three sea training experiences as a marine transportation student
- Mechanical Engineering with license - three sea training experiences as an engineering student
- Mechanical Engineering - one sea training experience
- Oceanography - one sea training or international experience

Recommendations

Section addressing admission requirements for license track programs:

- Citizenship/TWIC requirements
- USCG medical requirements – CG719K
- USCG Safety and Suitability requirements including National Driver's Registry background check for entry level/cadet ratings

Review of language within Resident Alien Status and Immigration Requirements for Licensure sections, as this does not accurately reflect USCG Licensing requirements.

Office of Marine Programs

Discover Real-World Training at Sea

The **Office of Marine Programs** is at the core of Cal Maritime's distinctive, hands-on experience, setting the course for cadet success through immersive, real-world maritime training. This dynamic department oversees **Waterfront Operations**, **Training Ship *Golden Bear***, and the **Commercial Sea Term**, ensuring cadets in licensed programs are exceptionally prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the maritime industry.

Waterfront and Maritime Operations

From your very first day, you'll step into an unparalleled learning environment at Cal Maritime's historic **Boathouse and Marina**. Here, cadets train on a wide range of vessels, from traditional rowboats to modern workboats, tugboats, and T-boats. Our **small boat handling program** is regarded as one of the finest in the nation, giving students a strong foundation in seamanship and vessel operations.

Throughout the academic year, the **Maritime Operations Department** offers specialized training in water safety, shipboard operations, vessel maintenance, and maritime management. You'll progress through our fleet, starting with double-ended rowboats and advancing to more complex vessels, all while building confidence and competency on the water.

Training Ship *Golden Bear*

At the heart of your maritime education is **Training Ship *Golden Bear***-a 450-foot floating classroom docked right in Cal Maritime's front yard. Every cadet trains aboard *Golden Bear* during the academic year, applying classroom theory to real-world maritime systems while developing leadership within the **Corps of Cadets**.

Each summer, first- and third-year cadets embark on a two-month **Summer Sea Term** aboard the *Golden Bear*. Led by ship crew, licensed faculty and industry professionals, this voyage is an immersive experience in **navigation, engineering, operations, and leadership**. Cadets also complete the U.S. Coast Guard **Lifeboatman certification**, passing both written and practical exams.

The ship features a **multi-million-dollar Navigation Laboratory** equipped with state-of-the-art systems-making the *Golden Bear* one of the premier navigation training platforms in the country.

More than a training cruise, the **Summer Sea Term** is a journey of professional growth and global awareness. As cadets visit international ports, they engage with other cultures and develop the cross-cultural competence essential in today's maritime world.

Commercial Sea Term

In second year, cadets take their training on a **commercial vessel** through the **Commercial Sea Term**. This is their first professional immersion into the maritime industry-working shoulder-to-shoulder with licensed mariners, gaining insight into real-world operations, and navigating the complexities of global shipping.

From bridge operations and cargo handling to engine room systems, you'll see your classroom knowledge come alive in a commercial context. It's a rare opportunity to **refine your skills, demonstrate your readiness, and build career-shaping industry connections**.

Launch Your Maritime Career

Whether it's through small boat training, global sea voyages, or commercial shipping experience, the **Office of Marine Programs** equips you with the technical expertise, leadership skills, and global perspective that define a Cal Maritime graduate.