**After Action Report**

**Letters and Certificates Sent to USMA Class of 2023 Appointees Prior to R-Day**

**USMA Class of 1973 50-Year Affiliation Program**

Class ’73 Points of Contact:

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Background:  The 50-year Class Affiliation Program has existed for a number of years as sponsored by the West Point Association of Graduates (AOG).  Generally, prior to Reception Day (R-Day), the 50-year Affiliate Class has been reliant upon West Point Societies (subordinates of the AOG) or  West Point Parents Clubs (WPPC - coordinated by the West Point Public Affairs Office) to communicate the Class Affiliation Program and present certificates/mementos to Appointees (those accepting offers of admission).  During the 45th Class Reunion of the Class of 1973 in September of 2018, an unscientific, anecdotal survey of members of the Class of 2022 confirmed that the presentation of certificates/mementos and awareness of the Class Affiliation Program was very inconsistent – both in terms of what was received and when items were received. The latter issue was quite significant with regard to the distribution of dog tags by the Class of 1972. The distribution occurred over a period of months at a number of events – i.e., society/parent club meetings, R-Day, and the March Back.  Soon thereafter, the leadership of the Class of 1973 embraced an objective of "universality" (every Appointee receives the same thing) and "consistency" (every Appointee receives something around the same time) in providing the Class of 2023 with information about the 50-year Class Affiliation Program and a memento from the Class of 1973.  Subsequently, a strategy was developed to meet this objective by working closely with the West Point Admissions Office (WPAO).

Execution:  In time, two letters were developed (one to each Appointee to the Class of 2023 and one to their parents - each signed by the President of the Class of 1973) explaining the 50-year Class Affiliation Program.  The letter to the parents included an invitation to the continental breakfast hosted by the Class of 1973, which we believe contributed significantly to the increase in participation in the continental breakfast – the metric is that food ran out for the first time (as reported by AOG) and quite early. The letter to the parents was never done before, and proved to be quite popular among the parents. The letter was also posted on the Facebook site for the West Point Class of 2023 Parents. Additionally, a "Certificate of Affiliation" was designed, coordinated with the Class 1973 leadership, and then advanced for signature to the President of the Class of 1973 and the AOG President and CEO.  Copies of the letters and the certificate are attached to this After Action Review.

The WPAO was entrusted with the responsibility to get the letters and certificates printed and delivered to Appointees to the Class of 2023, since it was the only entity having access to personally identifiable information (PII) such as names and mailing addresses.

The original thought was that the letters and certificates would be printed at a commercial printing site. It was not considered at the time that, if the WPAO supports the effort through normal operations, the WPAO must comply with the Federal Acquisition Regulation and use the West Point Print Plant (WPPP) and the Government Printing Office (GPO). Thus, a contract was established with the GPO to print the letters and the WPPP was tasked with printing the certificates. Unfortunately, it was discovered that both options were expensive and, in the case of the GPO, non-responsive when compared with commercial alternatives. The letters were printed by the WPPP on 1 May 2019 and the certificates printed in-house by the WPAO, because the GPO did not meet performance deadlines. On 3 May 2019 1,009 sets of letters and certificates were mailed to Appointees to the Class of 2023 after they had committed to acceptance of their offers of admission by midnight on 30 April 2019.  On 18 May 2019, representatives of the Class of 1973 presented sets of letters and certificates to 193 Appointees during the graduation ceremonies of the United States Military Academy Preparatory School Class of 2019, who had accepted offers of admission to the Class of 2023.

Results:  The objective of "universality" and "consistency" in providing the Class of 2023 with information about the 50-year Class Affiliation Program and a memento (the certificate) from the Class of 1973 was met completely.  During Reception Day on 1 July 2019, representatives of the Class of 1973 engaged Appointees of the Class of 2023 in conversation before they entered Eisenhower Hall as well as parents and other family members.  All conversations confirmed that Appointees and their parents had received the letters and certificates and were familiar with the 50-year Class Affiliation Program and the continental breakfast for the parents and family members.

Lessons Learned/Recommendations:

1.  It may have been better to mail the letters and certificates to all who were offered admission into the USMA. This would reduce mailing costs. If this approach is taken, then letters and certificates must be printed and provided to the WPAO by mid-January so that the documents can be included in the "offer of Admissions" packets sent to Cadet Candidates.

    NOTE: Approximately 1,400 sets of documents are required for an incoming class of 1,200 due to declinations of the offer of admission.

2.  If the WPAO supports the Class through normal operations, they must comply with the Federal Acquisition Regulation and use the WPPP and the GPO (both expensive and non-responsive when compared with commercial alternatives). It is recommended that an exemption be requested very early in the process.

3. If this effort can be exempt from requirements to use the GPO and WPPP, then commercial printing should be considered. Final decision should be left to the WPAO.

    NOTE: Commercial pricing with Staples was researched after the WPPP was deemed to be unresponsive: letters printed in black and white on 24 pound plain paper were $.12 each; certificates in color on 110 pound card-stock were $.60 each. The GPO contract for printing 1,500 copies of the new cadet and parent letters (3,000 copies total) had a cost of $795.00. It is assumed that, for the same task, using Staples would have cost $360.00.

4.  Keep both the WPAO Associate Director for Support (currently LTC Rance Lee) and WPAO Associate Director for Enrollment and Recruiting (currently LTC Tim Viles) as well as the WPAO Operations/Budget Officer (currently John Sanchez) apprised of the concept of operation.





