

**Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
March 10, 2021
Zoom Teleconference**

Attendees:

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

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

Steven Dubay
Deputy Chief
Colorado Springs Fire Department
375 Printers Parkway
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

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

Kristin Crowley
Deputy Chief
Los Angeles Fire Department
200 N. Main Street, Suite 1770
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Thomas E. Romaine, Jr.
Smokechaser
Minnesota Department of Natural
Resources - Forestry
644 Pfaender Drive
New Ulm, MN 56073

Dr. Mark A. Rivero
Site Coordinator
Southern Illinois University
1044 Beaver Crest Court
Henderson, NV 89015

Michael Macey
Division Director
Simtable
40A Calle Josephina
Santa Fe, NM 87506

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

Mr. Kevin Brame, Branch Chief, Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch, NFA
Chief Steve Dean, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Ken Farmer, Branch Chief, Education, Training and Partnerships Branch, NFA
Mr. Al Fluman, Director, USFA/NETC Management, Operations and Support Services Division
Mr. Eriks Gabliks, Superintendent, NFA
Ms. Deb Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist
Ms. Julia Hanson-Takyi, Analyst, Office of Partnership and Engagement, Department of Homeland Security
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA; Acting Fire Administrator, USFA
Ms. Ellen Newlin, Program Specialist
Mr. Lester Rich, Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA
Ms. Michelle Spielman, Secretary
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center, USFA
Ms. Tiffany Warren, Branch Chief, Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch, NFA

Others in attendance/public attendees:

Mr. Jacob Bostick

Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome
Chief John S. Butler, Chairperson, Board of Visitors
Dr. Patricia McIntosh, Vice Chairperson, Board of Visitors
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration
Mr. Eriks Gabliks, Superintendent, National Fire Academy
Chief Steve Dean, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Prior to the start of the meeting, Chief John Butler indicated that he would be unavailable for the meeting due to an unforeseen continuity of operations issue in his parent agency. He thanked Dr. Patricia McIntosh for stepping in today and leading the meeting.

Chief Steve Dean welcomed the Board with opening remarks:

Good morning, 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 for completing the necessary security and ethical processes to serve as Special Government Employees.

My name is Steve Dean. I am the Deputy Superintendent of the NFA and will be serving as Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO) for 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. Deb Gartrell-Kemp, whose work with FACA officials at FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security have made this meeting possible and made my work immeasurably easier and more productive. Ms. Michelle Spielman and Ms. Ellen Newlin are Deb's backups, and I want to thank them officially for everything they do to make this meeting successful.

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. No comments were sent in from the public.

Dextera/ZAI support staff, Ms. Tina Mumpower, will be taking notes and will compile minutes. Minutes will include matters discussed and conclusions reached by the board. As ADFO, 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. Please be sure to state your name before speaking so the minutes can be recorded accurately. If you have notes, please email them to Deb today so she can forward them to Tina.

One thing we did not do at the last meeting was to swear in the new members. Would the new members, Mr. Mike Macey, Mr. Steven Dubay, Ms. Kristin Crowley and Dr. Mark A. Rivero, please repeat after me: "I do solemnly swear or affirm that I will support and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, both foreign and domestic. And I will, in truth, faith and allegiance, do the same that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion and that I will and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter so help me God." Welcome to the Board of Visitors.

Vice Chairman McIntosh, I convene this meeting of the USFA Board of Visitors to you. The roll call has already been done.

Dr. McIntosh called the meeting to order.

Dr. McIntosh welcomed everyone. She advised that all Board of Visitor members submitted a biography about themselves. This information was initially intended to be internal; however, it will now be included with the NFA instructor newsletters. Each newsletter will feature a member of the Board of Visitors to help NFA instructors learn who serves on the Board and how they represent the various aspects of the U.S. fire service. Dr. McIntosh then asked Chief Tonya Hoover for any opening remarks.

Chief Hoover welcomed everyone. She stated that she was currently serving as the acting fire administrator for the USFA. She expects that Ms. Deanne Criswell, the nominee for the FEMA administrator, will be confirmed in early April. Chief Hoover is looking forward to the confirmation, and she hopes that once it is complete, the process for the position of fire administrator will begin. The process for the fire administrator position will go through the White House, which includes an extensive background check, interviews and vetting. Once that is complete, she will return as the deputy fire administrator. Chief Hoover stated that she is starting to see movement within the 2022 budget. She is hopeful that the information will receive a positive

vote and can move forward. Items include wildland urban interface (WUI) initiatives for both the NFA and the National Fire Programs (NFP) and the learning management systems (LMSs) for further outreach to people in the communities. Chief Hoover stated that she is currently engaged with most of the FEMA directives. She advised that she needed to leave the meeting after her report due to another call with all the regional administrators to talk about what the USFA has to offer and to build relationships. Chief Hoover advised that everyone would hear about the details of the campus updates from Mr. Al Fluman. She believes that everyone will be highly impressed once they are able to come back to the campus. Chief Hoover also stated that Mr. Eriks Gabliks will report on the learning environment and students coming back to campus. Dr. McIntosh asked if there were any questions for Chief Hoover. There were none. She thanked Chief Hoover for the update.

Mr. Gabliks stated he would defer his comments until the NFA update. He advised Dr. McIntosh that there were a couple of scheduling conflicts within the team and asked if Mr. Fluman could speak next. He also advised that Mr. Bill Troup will be filling in for Chief Richard Patrick.

Chief Dean also stated that he would defer his comments, and he would speak after Mr. Gabliks if he had anything to add.

U.S. Fire Administration Data, Research, Prevention and Response Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center, U.S. Fire Administration

Mr. Troup spoke for Chief Patrick. He reported the following:

- In support of Women's History Month, an article was published titled "Supporting Women in Fire and EMS: The USFA Commitment." The article, which includes a statement from Chief Hoover and emerging health and safety issues for women in the fire service, can be found at https://www.usfa.fema.gov/current_events/030321.html.
- In partnership with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the inaugural National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Week was held Feb. 22-26. There were 5 webinars, dealing with a variety of NFIRS topics with 1,488 participants totaling 10,416 training hours. If you were unable to attend, please check out the website at <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/nfirs/nfirs-week.html>.
- On March 5, the first of numerous and short end-user training videos for the eNFIRS system went live on the USFA website and YouTube channel. These videos cover how to use the system, navigate the new interface, and provide much-needed educational and reference material for the entire user community. This information has been disseminated to NFIRS state program managers. These videos can be found at the following link: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/nfirs/support/training.html>.
- From Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2020, the NFIRS COVID-19 Special Study collected 4,566,280 responses with 956,338 fire service personnel responses to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 incidents. Currently, over 5 million incidents have been reported. Information

reported through the NFIRS COVID-19 Special Study Dashboard can be found on the USFA website at https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/nfirs/covid-19_dashboard.html.

- The first report in the Wildfire Report Series was released on March 8. The “Investigation of MODIS-Detected Fires in NFIRS” data report investigates the feasibility of using Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer data (National Aeronautics and Space Administration technology) as a means for identifying wildfire incidents that may be missing from the NFIRS data. This report can be found at <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/wui/data/modis-detected-fires-report/index.html>.
- The website for the USFA has been redesigned to keep up with new technology. To ensure it is the best that can be offered, the new look is based on the science of website design.
- The USFA “Emergency Services Ergonomics and Wellness” handbook is being released in small portions to be used for training. The handbook can be found at the following link: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/operations/ergonomics/>.
- The USFA “America Burning” and “America Burning: Wildland Urban Interface” edition projects with the IAFC are ongoing.
- The USFA NFP has partnerships with numerous national fire service groups from EMS Safety with the International Association of Fire Fighters to Volunteer Retention and Recruitment with the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Mr. Troup advised that staff is available to help in any way, and he stated that it was an honor to be able to report this information today. He asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Dubay stated that in December it was reported that staff members were deployed as part of the pandemic response. He asked if those employees were still deployed. Mr. Troup advised that they are still a working part of the task force although they are no longer deployed. He explained that they are still actively involved in support work. Mr. Troup stated that some work has been completed with about half of the staff. He said that a lot of employees are active in emergency medical services (EMS) and fire services. Mr. Dubay stated the importance of all the components, and Mr. Troup thanked him.

Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvements on the National Emergency Training Center Management Campus

Mr. Al Fluman, Director, U.S. Fire Administration/National Emergency Training Center Management, Operations & Support Services Division

Mr. Fluman advised that he would outline current campus projects then talk briefly on planned projects for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. He provided the following information.

- The National Emergency Training Center (NETC) main gate and visitor center project is still ongoing. Mr. Fluman was excited to announce that the new gate and entrance is

completed and open. He said that finishing touches are being completed on the visitor center. He explained that there were weather delays, but the concrete was being poured March 11. After that, the building will be furnished. Mr. Fluman stated that the building and both lanes coming into campus should be open within a couple of weeks.

- Building J basement renovation is about 50% complete. There will be office space and classrooms for the arson program which will free up some classrooms for other training. Mr. Fluman is hopeful that this project will be complete within 6 weeks.
- Building L renovation should be complete in a couple of months. Staff will be moved to this area, then Building O basement renovations will begin. The Building O renovations will add 40 to 50 dormitory rooms.
- Solar panels will be installed on Building J. Once complete, this will aid in the continued reduction of the electric bill toward a net zero goal. Mr. Fluman explained that the solar panel installation on multiple buildings have assisted with lowering the electric bill cost from \$2,000,000, 15 years ago, to \$400,000 currently, and that will continue to go down.
- The next major upgrade will be the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) in Building N. This will be the last building for that project. Mr. Fluman stated that the HVAC in Building N has not been replaced in a long time, and it will assist with energy efficiency. The project will take a couple of months to complete.
- Building O will have minor roof repair completed along with the renovation for the dormitory rooms.
- Some upgrades will be completed at the burn range.

Mr. Fluman stated that he would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Macey asked if there was anything scheduled to be done at the Learning Resource Center. Mr. Fluman advised that current preparations were underway to comply with COVID-19 capacity for when students return to campus. He also stated that the publication center was moved to this area to provide a central place for students to go. Mr. Fluman said that some changes will occur later, including HVAC.

Mr. Dubay asked if there were any further updates on the master plan to add 2 buildings for health and wellness purposes. Mr. Fluman advised that there have not been any new developments. He stated the plan is in the system and some of it may start in FY 2023.

National Fire Academy Updates on Developments, Deliveries, Staffing and Admissions

Mr. Eriks Gabliks, Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Mr. Gabliks indicated that each branch chief will give their respective updates.

Mr. Lester Rich from the Response Branch spoke first. He said that the branch has been active within the FEMA COVID-19 response. Mr. Rich advised that he had just returned from deployment. He stated that there is 1 employee currently deployed to Florida and another will be deployed soon due to their language skills. Mr. Rich provided the following information.

- Incident Management:
 - The highest priority is the conversion of the legacy year 3 Executive Fire Officer (EFO) courses to be led by virtual instruction and completed before the end of July.
 - There are some courses being converted to a synchronous (S code) delivery. This means presenting the course live via Zoom. Students will have access to the LMS to take exams and pick up materials, but the instructor delivers live. These courses include:
 - “Decision-Making for Initial Company Operations” (F/W/O0457).
 - “Preparation for Initial Company Operations” (F/W/O/S0458).
 - Carpet is being placed in areas that had potential for slip/fall issues.
 - The incident management area is improving simulation-based course delivery with an update to the simulation lab, including hardware, software and facility upgrades.
- Responder Health and Safety:
 - “Incident Safety Officer” (F/W/O/S0729) is now offered by synchronous method.
 - Current course rewrites:
 - “Incident Safety Officer” (F/W/O/S0729).
 - “Health and Safety Program Manager” (F/W/O0722).
- Emergency Medical Services:
 - Work is being done on alternative course delivery methods, potentially looking at new processes and support for breaking from traditional NFA methods. One option is a hybrid method where the instructor would be virtual, but all the students would be in the same classroom.
 - Integration and approval of the NFA online mediated LMS is pending. This program has been exceptionally hard hit by COVID-19 response measures, including suspension of in-person offerings and the loss of the LMS.
 - Course revisions are underway.

- Hazardous Materials:
 - Involved with the initial scoping and integration of the new Jack Rabbit (JR) III Program. This is approximately a 3-year project.
 - Involved externally with the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration on several issues associated with the Emergency Response Guidebook, liquefied natural gas rail and the evolution of NFPA 470, *Hazardous Materials Standards for Responders*.
 - Ramping up efforts to collaborate with the FEMA chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear ChemResponder group as well as the Environmental Protection Agency Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology project related to projected JR III plume modeling and information input.
- Fire Investigation:
 - Continues with synchronous Zoom deliveries of “Fire Investigation: First Responders” (W/F/O/S0770) course. A class is also scheduled to be held on campus in April if the students come back.
 - Partnership continues with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the National Response Team. In April, a training course using the burn cells and classrooms will be delivered in person at the NETC.
 - Continuation of the new partnership with the ATF and Customs and Border Protection Canine Training Center in Front Royal, Virginia, by providing additional joint training opportunities with the Accelerant Detection Program and the NFA Burn Laboratory.
 - Upgrades to the burn range, including student activity space, restrooms, a shower and a place for a washer and dryer, are being pursued. These are fire health and safety items that would show support for the Health and Safety Program.

Mr. Rich asked if there were any questions.

Dr. McIntosh asked if the new synchronous model would continue beyond the current COVID-19 circumstances. Mr. Rich stated that he looks for it to continue due to the need for classes that are tied to certifications, etc. Mr. Rich added that he has been pleasantly surprised with student interaction. His observation has been that there is very little interaction among the students on the first day, but the students are very engaged in the chat room on the second day. Mr. Rich added that the students are asked to leave their cameras on for video, talks and chats to take place. He expects that if the enrollment numbers stay up, this method will stay. Dr. McIntosh expressed her excitement as this method brings opportunities to reach additional people, especially some of the volunteer departments. Mr. Rich added that this method has allowed international participation,

with students from Brazil, Canada, Jamaica and Samoa. He said the commitment is impressive; for example, the time of day when class begins is 6:00 a.m. in California, and for some of the international students the time gap is larger.

Dr. McIntosh asked about the class size. Mr. Rich advised that the number started at 15 and increased from there. He added that 44 students were too many due to the time it takes for introductions and building cohesiveness. Currently, the number is 32; however, a smaller number may be used if there are activities that involve Zoom breakouts. Those classes are currently at about 20 students. He explained that the number of students needs to include a balance so that it does not take too much time away from instruction.

Ms. Crowley asked how many courses are being offered with the synchronous method in comparison to the number of classes being offered on campus. Mr. Rich explained that he is unsure of how many courses were offered on campus before COVID-19 due to state weekends, etc. He said that Mr. Ken Farmer might be able to provide that number; however, there are currently 4 courses in the Response Branch being offered synchronously. He added that more will come as experience is gained and adjustments are made. Mr. Rich said that the classes have been filling up approximately a week after they are posted, which shows that there is a demand. He added that Mr. Gabliks has been good about streamlining processes, and that things are being completed smoothly.

Mr. Macey asked if there was a long-term plan of what courses are expected to be delivered on site versus virtually. Mr. Rich explained that all the programs within the NFA have been creating workarounds due to the LMS being in transition. He believes that with Blackboard being approved, the transition will occur with more of the pre-course type material, like the Health and Safety and EFO programs have been doing. He explained that a couple of weeks of work is completed virtually before coming to campus so that hands-on time can be maximized. He added that this is working well with the courtroom testimonies and has been well received. Mr. Rich believes that new courses will be built from that model, and that the NFA courses will become a blend of deliveries. He feels that there is a need and a demand for that. He does not envision courses being moved entirely to a virtual platform and instead supplemented by it so that they now have both deliveries. Mr. Gabliks added that Zoom is a baby step for the NFA due to the government's hesitation to use outside systems. He said that Zoom has some limitations, and the use of Blackboard will be a factor in how things move forward. Mr. Gabliks explained that not every course delivery will align with a virtual method because some classes need the interaction for learning purposes. He said that community risk reduction and EMS courses are more virtual in nature. Mr. Gabliks stated that as virtual methods increase, there needs to be an awareness to ensure students in different time zones are being accommodated. Mr. Gabliks also said that the structure of the courses being delivered virtually are being reviewed to retain American Council on Education (ACE) recognition.

Dr. McIntosh asked if it was too soon to discuss the effect virtual classes have on the budget and the number of students being serviced. Mr. Gabliks advised that there is currently no official plan for virtual learning. He explained that currently a determination is being made on what is the best way to deliver a course. There are states that cannot deliver classroom courses, and a reallocation of funds for those instructors who are unable to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions is being

completed to allow for virtual instruction. Mr. Gabliks added that the footprint for campus instruction must be maintained and the virtual footprint added.

Dr. McIntosh asked if any demographic changes have been seen. Mr. Gabliks stated that none have been seen yet; however, demographic awareness is being worked on.

Dr. McIntosh asked if there were any findings that people are not able to thrive in the current environment. Mr. Gabliks stated that the EFO environment may be the area where that is occurring, and Mr. Kevin Brame will talk about that.

Mr. Gabliks asked if there were any further questions for Mr. Rich. He then stated that Mr. Farmer would speak next.

Mr. Farmer from the Education, Training and Partnership Branch reported the following:

- There is a new distance learning staff member who will start on March 28. She is coming from a Johns Hopkins University distance learning position. Her name is Ms. Fatumah Davis.
- Work continues in preparation for the Blackboard Authority to Operate (ATO) in June 2021. Staff is working on a single sign-on and making sure that all the systems can communicate with one another. Ms. Juliann Frantz is leading this effort. ATO is scheduled for June 1.
- Staff is working on learning the Blackboard system and training staff on its use. Mr. Mark Magers, Ms. Terri Little, Ms. Joyce Glass and Ms. Frantz are involved in this effort.
- Staff is working internally to develop a plan to market 30 2-day classes nationwide for all fire departments. Facebook will be used to market the courses. The plan is to announce them on April 1. Ms. Lori Welch is leading this effort with support from Mr. Tyler Shaw.
- There were 70 state classes cancelled due to COVID-19. Staff is working with the state fire training directors to reoffer the classes to the states. As of March 9, 16 classes have been requested. Ms. Welch is leading this effort.
- Mr. Shaw is virtually participating in the Naval Postgraduate Program all this week.
- Ms. Diane Close is working to manage the updated state training grants for this year, and she continues to work on closing out prior years.
- Recently a Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) board meeting was held with the new board members. The updated job description for the vice position that Mr. Mike McCabe held has been completed. It is expected to be released for applicants by FEMA in the next 2 weeks.

- National Wildlife Coordinating Group and WUI classes across the country will be cleaned up and ready by the end of the week.

Mr. Farmer asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Macey asked if there would be any outreach to the military for the 30 2-day classes that will be advertised on Facebook. He also asked if these are being offered to all ages, including high school students. Mr. Farmer advised that there is no age requirement on the classes. He also stated that the focus has been meeting the demand of the public, and that there has not been any specific focus on the military, although it could be done. Mr. Gabliks added that military students have been in some classes. He said that recently in one of Mr. Rich's classes there were students from the U.S. Marine Corps. Mr. Gabliks indicated that as we move into social media work, keeping up with demand will be a challenge. Mr. Rich added that it has been interesting to see broader audiences than expected. He explained that people have brought their children to fire investigation introduction classes or to watch the science block as part of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) projects. He added that these are opportunities for anyone who is homeschooling and needs a STEM project. Mr. Gabliks also advised that the virtual classes are no different than the other classes, and that students must still apply and go through the admission and screening process.

Ms. Tiffany Warren from the Training Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch provided the following update.

- Instructor bidding period for courses being delivered in July, Aug. and Sept. 2021 opened on March 1 and will be open until April 1.
- Schedules for FY 2022 are being created, and registration is set to begin mid-April.

There were no questions for Ms. Warren.

Mr. Brame from the Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch provided the following information.

- The youth firesetting courses are being updated to make them more current. There is a 6-day pilot class scheduled for July. Once that is complete, the course will be developed into an off-campus, mediated course. Youth fires are a significant problem across the U.S. and since not everyone can come to campus, the regional delivery will allow for a broader audience. Part of the course is to conduct an interview. Typically, the class would be taken to a facility for this. Mr. Mike Weller is working on obtaining tablets so that students will be able to conduct virtual interviews with those in juvenile centers. The interviews will take place with correctional officers present.
- The Fire Prevention Technical Program curriculum is being updated by Mr. Keith Heckler, who is a licensed protection engineer. New tables are being purchased which will allow the review of digital components. Although the expense of this endeavor is costly, it will

be worthwhile. The return of an on-campus fire protection lab is being pursued. The lab would be brought back with additional safety components.

- A virtual course for “Training Supervision” (P0736) is being worked on. A pilot class is scheduled for April 9. The 3 ½-day class will be delivered through Zoom. There will also be other courses being moved to a mediated platform.
- Some staff members are currently performing double duty. This has brought some challenges as 2 of the 3 specialists are filling in behind the new branch chiefs. Currently, there are 2 vacancies to be filled, 1 for a specialist and 1 for support staff. Ms. Julie Chase started a few weeks ago as a new instructional services specialist. Ms. Chase previously served as an instructional contractor with the U.S. Department of State. She has a master’s degree, is very energetic and is engaged in a doctoral program at Vanderbilt University. Mr. Dave Donohue and Mr. Heckler have both stepped up to assist the USFA and the NFA with the International Code Council which is also keeping them busy.
- The year 3 legacy EFO Program is being worked on by Mr. Richard Sexton. The fourth-year students are attending classes virtually with the synchronous method. There are 22 students who have completed the program with this method, and by April 3 an additional 100 students will be finished. There have been some scheduling conflicts with the Zoom presentation times; however, accommodations have been able to be made to make things work. The future of this method will be dependent upon the progress of the year 3 students.
- The first course of the revised EFO Program has been completed by 118 students. This course, “Executive Leadership: Introduction to Executive Fire Officer and Research Design” (M5101), is a 10-week course in research, design and data gathering. The course is ACE approved for 3 credit hours at the graduate level. Some students did not expect the detailed content or the rigorous nature. There are some marketing changes being made so that people understand why the course is needed. The program started before anyone knew of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are some students trying to get through the program who now have added demands. As a result, some of the students have asked to be moved to FY 2022. Some students have also dropped out due to other factors such as retirement and medical problems. There have also been some who have dropped out because they were not happy. Course data is being analyzed. There have been 8 offerings of which 2 class averages were below 3.0 and 4 classes were above a 4.0. One of the classes below a 3.0 average was the very first offering. Some changes have already been made, but as learning continues, more adjustments will be made. It has been determined that the cohort design is not working. There will now be a selection of course dates for students to select from. They will be given 3 different dates to select. The mediated course will be a prerequisite and will need to be completed before the residential course. The intent is to make this available for completion within a 2-year period with the flexibility to allow it to become a 2 ½- to 3-year commitment when life changes happen. The first week of residential class, 50 students, will begin on April 12 if students can come back to campus. That will be followed by 3 more offerings.

- Applications for the EFO Program that will begin in 2022 are being reviewed. There were 454 applicants, which is considerably more than the past couple of years. The review will hopefully be complete within the next week, and then students will be notified.
- In collaboration with Mr. Farmer and Ms. Close, dialogue has been started on articulations with colleges and universities. Students are asking for direct opportunities to apply for a degree. Conversations are being held with the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Park Point University, Embrey-Riddle University and Oklahoma State University to see if this can be done.

Once Mr. Brame finished his report, he spoke about the previous comments regarding the military. He stated that over the years, the EFO Program has had a multitude of U.S. Department of Defense civilian firefighters from around the world. He said that 1 was from Japan and 1 from Italy. He expressed that while there is a passion to have the military, those serving in active duty are in a different situation, making it difficult for them to enroll in courses. Mr. Brame asked for any questions.

Dr. McIntosh stated that she is in favor of articulation agreements and referred to the EFO Program, asking if there are any reverse articulation agreements for students who have already taken similar courses to M5101. Mr. Brame indicated that there is discussion being held to consider a provision that a course completed within a certain number of years would be reviewed for possible acceptance when a transcript is provided by the student. He also stated the possibility of removing M5101 and requiring it as a prerequisite for application to the EFO Program.

Dr. McIntosh asked when a topic for the EFO project is declared. Mr. Brame advised that the topic decision has become part of the process. He explained that adaptive challenges are identified during the teaching of the consult process, which can assist with the selection of a topic. He added that the intent is not to have a commitment to a topic at the end of M5101, just to have the student start thinking about it. A commitment to a topic does not have to be complete until the student is in the first semester of “Executive Fire Officer Thesis” (M5105).

Mr. Dubay asked what the new configuration is for the EFO Program courses, mediated versus residential. Mr. Brame explained that there are 5 mediated courses and 4 residential courses that alternate. He added that there are still some determinations to be made regarding when the thesis will be started and the duration of components. Mr. Dubay thanked Mr. Brame and added that while reference has been made regarding the M5101 material not being fun, that some people do enjoy it, and it is encouraging. Mr. Brame said that the current data shows that we need to improve the marketing process for the course to ensure students understand that they will work hard due to the academic rigorousness, but the reward will be worth it.

Mr. Gabliks provided the following updates.

- The NFA has remained open for business during the pandemic, but in a different format. Off-campus, in-person classes continue to be offered on a state-by-state basis in partnership with state fire training agencies and in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health guidelines. The NFA is also offering more virtual

training opportunities than ever before, and this will continue. These virtual opportunities have enabled the NFA to reach students who may have never had the opportunity to attend a class offered by the organization.

- The NFA anticipates resuming delivery of on-campus training in early April. Discussions are ongoing regarding the health and safety of the staff, instructors and students, along with the compliance of the CDC and local guidelines. The NFA will remain active in communicating, internally and externally, on the status of the campus and the guidelines in place.
- The NFA is working with Management, Operations & Support Services on several upgrades on infrastructure, such as the command and control tactical simulation lab, the electronic digital drafting tables for fire prevention, and the fire investigation burn range.
- The NFA staff is working to manage the effects that on-campus class cancellations created for the EFO and Managing Officer programs. Students enrolled in classes that were postponed due to COVID-19 are being rescheduled. It will take some time to work through the effects; however, the result will be that students will complete the training programs.
- The FESHE position discussed by Mr. Farmer will have an expanded role to align with the future of the NFA and USFA and the partnerships we envision with not only colleges and universities, but also high schools with fire and emergency services programs. There will be a focus on building relations with more colleges and how to include high schools in what the NFA and USFA do. Mr. Troup with the NFP has a lot of information that could be beneficial to students working on high school projects, etc. The goal is to look at what can be done on a larger scale. The vision is that this position will not only work within its NFA branch but in all branches and programs within the USFA to share the work being done.
- Thanks to the hard work of Ms. Gartrell-Kemp, a draft NFA Board of Visitors Welcome Package has been created. The welcome package will be distributed to bring awareness of the Board of Visitors to instructors, and it will help with the on-boarding of new members. The Board was asked to look at the document and send feedback to Ms. Gartrell-Kemp within a month so that changes can be made and the project completed.

Mr. Gabliks also suggested that the professional development subcommittee share what is being done with the Managing Officer Program and how it has progressed. He stated that the program is having its 5-year anniversary, and it may be beneficial to share the impacts of the program.

Chief Dean advised that COVID-19 protocols will have to be in place when students return to campus. He said that social distancing and masks will be required. Chief Dean advised that the class sizes are 24-30 students and only 15 can be put into a classroom along with 2 instructors. He advised that the first working prototype is being worked on. It will allow 2 instructors in a classroom and the students to be split between that room and another. This process cost about \$9,000; therefore, one is being tested to identify any challenges. Dependent upon the outcome, it is possible that 3 or 4 more sets may be installed.

Mr. Gabliks stated that he understood a lot of information was presented, and he was happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Macey asked if any considerations were given to the COVID-19 vaccines. Mr. Gabliks advised that there was a thought to require them; however, the NFA's legal counsel has advised that they can be highly encouraged, but not required. He added that the CDC guidelines are being reviewed so that instructors can be informed. He said that some instructors can currently travel, and some cannot due to state restrictions. He added that some are comfortable with travelling and coming onto campus to teach while others are not comfortable. Options are currently being reviewed. Mr. Gabliks also stated that the Command Post Pub would not be open. Going off campus will be discouraged, but it would be up to the student. He indicated that the NFA does not want to be the next place in the news because of an outbreak. Chief Dean added that the NFA is still doing COVID-19 tests even when people are vaccinated. He said the vaccinations are great but there is not 100% certainty with them. Chief Dean advised that the costs of the tests are a concern. He explained that when a rapid test is positive, a polymerase chain reaction test must be completed. At this time, FEMA is paying for the tests, but that will end on March 31. How to continue the tests after that time is being reviewed. It needs to be determined if the campus will continue the same or at some other level. The tests are currently conducted every 72 hours for every individual on campus. This is what FEMA headquarters is doing; however, there are other facilities who are doing them once a week. He explained that there are good reasons for the differences, such as the same people are reporting to 1 location each day. That is not the case with the NFA campus, and keeping people as safe as possible is a priority.

Mr. Dubay asked where to send the feedback for the welcome package. He added that it is a great idea, and it looks good so far. Mr. Gabliks stated to share all feedback with Ms. Gartrell-Kemp.

There were no further questions or comments.

Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Reports

Professional Development Initiative Update

Dr. Patricia McIntosh, Chair

Dr. McIntosh stated that this committee is not active unless it is tasked with something. She asked Mr. Gabliks about his vision for the committee reporting on the Managing Officer Program. Mr. Gabliks explained that the staff would like to meet with the committee members to review the details and get their feedback. He added that Chief Butler may need to be removed from this committee since he is now the Board chairperson. Dr. McIntosh said that it seemed appropriate to have a meeting. She asked if the materials from the EFO Program exploration were still available. Mr. Gabliks explained that he sees the Managing Officer Program as more of a tune-up than a redesign like the EFO Program. He said that this may only take 2 to 3 hours, and it can be probably be done in 1 meeting. Dr. McIntosh was pleased to hear the length of the time commitment. She stated that a new chairperson may also be needed for the committee.

There was discussion surrounding how to appoint a co-chair. Ms. Julia Hanson-Takyi advised that either one could be appointed, or it could be done with a vote. Mr. Macey asked if there was a limit on the number of committee members. It was determined that the committee could consist of 2 primary Board of Visitors members and all others on the committee would be representatives. Several people were interested in becoming a part of the committee. Dr. McIntosh asked if anyone had completed the Managing Officer Program. Since no one had completed the program, Dr. McIntosh decided to defer making decisions until more could be learned about the members interested.

After the meeting, Ms. Hanson-Takyi provided clarity regarding committee members. She indicated that subcommittees are not subject to FACA so they may be composed in any way the committee would like. The chair and co-chair must be from the Board of Visitors. The remaining members may also be Board members, but they will be recognized as representatives. A decision was made that Mr. Tom Romaine will serve as co-chair because he expressed interest in past years. The other interested Board members will be included as members.

National Fire Incident Reporting System Chief Kevin Quinn, Chair

It was noted that this subcommittee has not met in a while. Because of the difficulty to reactivate a committee once removed, the committee will remain active for use as needs arise.

Chief Kevin Quinn reported that there was nothing to report since there have been no meetings. He stated that a lot of the Board members signed up for the Professional Development subcommittee; however, with his move to chair, a co-chair is needed. Dr. Rivero volunteered. A vote was held, and all were in favor.

Final Comments/Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled to be in person on campus in August. Mr. Gabliks will let everyone know the status soon so that travel arrangements can be made; otherwise, the meeting will be held virtually.

Meeting adjourned 2:59 p.m.