

DATE: 18 April 2024
FROM: Promotion Year (PY) 2024 Promotion Board Chairs / Assistant Surgeons General
TO: All Commissioned Corps Officers Considered for Promotion in PY2024
SUBJECT: OPEN LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Congratulations to those officers selected for promotion in PY 2024!

This was the first year in which we reviewed officers based on the new promotion categories (Medical, Dental, Applied Public Health, Allied Health, and Medical Services) and the first year in which the promotion zones were implemented (Below the Zone, In the Zone and Above the Zone). It is also the first year in which officers had the option to request a deferral, i.e., to opt-out of promotion examination. The impacts of these new policies are still being assessed, and we appreciate that this was a significant transition year for us all.

We continue to be extraordinarily impressed by the high caliber of officers across all ranks and categories. After reviewing the many promotion packages submitted, we found ourselves humbled by the level of influence, contributions, impact, and leadership you all have demonstrated, and we are all the more honored to serve with you. You perform in incredible ways across all strata of government, around the world, in many austere, isolated, and remote locations, for the underserved and vulnerable.

For those promoted, we are fully confident you will continue to excel in your duties at your higher rank. In fact, the Corps, its leadership, and your fellow officers have higher expectations of you at your new rank. We encourage you to embrace new opportunities to support your colleagues, Agency, profession, and the Corps to advance our mission and amplify our impact as a uniformed service.

For those officers who were not promoted, please know that this does not reflect a lack of recognition for your tremendous contributions. We saw many exceptional officers making a real difference through your service, and due to the extremely competitive nature of this process did not promote this cycle. If you were not “above the line,” do not confuse this with your value, importance, contribution, and impact. We do acknowledge that this distinction can be very challenging to discern in our culture where we mistakenly link position and rank with success. While it’s natural to be disappointed if you didn’t receive a promotion this cycle, we encourage you to use this experience as a learning opportunity as you prepare for promotion in the next cycle.

The Chairs of the Promotion Boards – all flag officers – offer the following recommendations for your consideration to improve already solid promotion packages:

- Take advantage of the board review comments, as they required three separate reviewers to select them for a comment to register on your scoresheet. If the comments are few or absent, consider reviewing the promotion benchmarks against your CV with your colleagues, a mentor, or your CPO on how to best align your accomplishments and impacts with the benchmarks – we expect many of you do this when preparing for promotion and emphasize the value in gathering and acting on the feedback of others.

- Be timely in package submission. Prioritize the time needed to put your best foot forward (i.e., start early, do a self-evaluation and invite others to review your packet and provide feedback), and be sure to verify your submitted package.
- Be attentive to detail, conciseness, and organization. This will contribute to a more professionally polished package and reduce the likelihood of an important detail in your package from being overlooked. In addition, it will minimize the time board member take to find the information they seek.
- Ensure CVs are updated, formatted correctly, and reflect each of the benchmarks upon which you are scored. Make it as easy as possible for board members to confirm where you have met or exceeded benchmarks, as the more time board members are required to search, the less time they will have to substantively review your entire packet.
- With the transition to multi-disciplinary promotion boards, it is important that acronyms be spelled out the first time and that profession-specific and agency-specific jargon be minimized or clarified, with a focus on conveying the impact of your efforts to board members outside of your category and agency.
- Work closely with your supervisory reporting line, your commissioned corps liaison, and your mentors to review the new decision points related to promotion examination deferral or opt-out. Some officers who exercised their opt-out option may have been successful, while other officers who did not opt-out, probably should have considered that option.
- Work closely with your rater and reviewing official on your COER and ROS to ensure that the associated narrative clearly documents your impact beyond what may be outlined in other promotion documents (using as much data as possible).
- Be succinct with your impact statements (less is typically more) and use as much of the word count space as you need to effectively tell your story. Be strategic about where and how you reiterate your most impactful work throughout your package.
- Develop your impact statements in a SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound). Ideally, use hard numbers, percentages, dollar figures to amplify your achievements and impacts.
- Focus your time and limited space on identifying factors that set you apart. What are the **unique** contributions that you have made to your agency and to the Corps? Explain why your contributions are important and relevant. How your unique contributions are reflected in your ROS is critical.
- Emphasize quality over quantity, clearly conveying leadership roles, what you contribute and your impact – particularly for Corps and professional support activities. While listing membership in a variety of groups shows where your interests lie; conveying what you are doing, why it's important, and how you are making an impact demonstrates your personal contribution to the advancement of the Corps, your category, and your profession. If for example, you are participating in PAC activities, Ensemble, and Honor Guard – how did you lead, innovate, and implement in a way that sets you apart? Was there a discernable impact to your involvement in these activities?

In closing, we recognize the hard work that went into preparing each promotion packet and are extremely proud of each of you and the important work that you do for our Nation. Having the privilege to chair the various promotion boards reinforced for each of us that the future of the Commissioned Corps is in the best of hands. Please continue to be vocal about the support you need from your agency and the Corps with respect to professional development and other needs. Your collective success is our Service's success.

In Officio Salutis

Promotion Board Chairs – Assistant Surgeons General