

Sea Year Experience Pays off for Cadets

Crowley Aids the Next Generation of Merchant Mariners with Experience and Training Aboard its Vessels

Story by Joy Kader



▶ **Textbooks told Cassandra Palma about topping off fuel and vapor recovery.** But when she used her own hands as a cadet to carry out the tasks aboard the Crowley-managed product tanker *MT Pelican State*, Palma's training as a cadet took off.

Sailing as a cadet among a commercial vessel crew, Palma learned first-hand how to do the essential, everyday tasks as an officer on a ship, such as taking soundings tank by tank and learning proper deck maintenance. She learned how communication with the chief mate was crucial, and how safety was a core value for success.

As a cadet at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, N.Y., Palma tasted reality through the sea year program, which allows high-performing cadets to gain valuable experience working on U.S.-flagged commercial ships while studying at a maritime academy. Now 23, she turned the training into an officer's post on Crowley's product tanker *MT Ohio*.

"Had I not been a cadet for Crowley, I wouldn't have felt confident becoming a third mate, even though my license said I was one," said Palma. "I got to be on the bow, dropping the anchor, calling out leads to the captain. I got to tie up the ship to the dock, learning how to troubleshoot along the way. I got to be in the cargo control room, topping off fuel and relaying orders to the guys on deck. I got to crude oil wash, strip tanks and disconnect cargo hoses."

Above: Crowley's Cassandra Palma puts her experience gleaned from her sea year aboard the *MT Pelican State* (below) to use to ensure a smooth maintenance dry docking in Freeport, Grand Bahamas.



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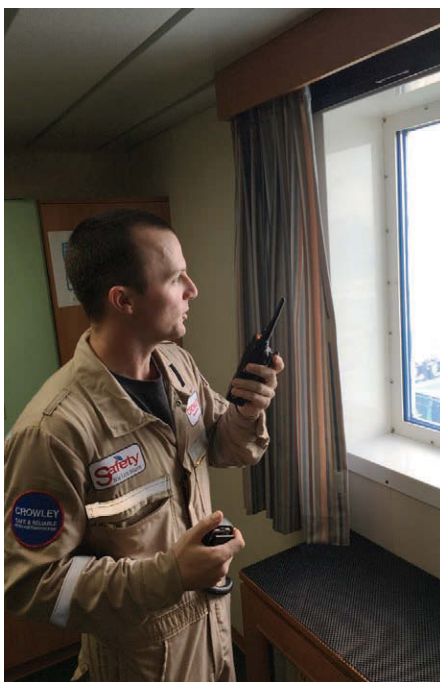
The sea year program combines the educational experience of the nation’s academies with the real world opportunities in the maritime industry. In addition to the federal academy, other academies that provide sea year opportunities in conjunction with Crowley and other maritime companies

include California Maritime Academy (CMA), Great Lakes Maritime Academy (GLMA), Maine Maritime Academy, Massachusetts Maritime Academy (MMA), State University New York Maritime College (SUNY) and Texas A&M Maritime Academy.

tugboats, tankers and articulated tug barges (ATB).

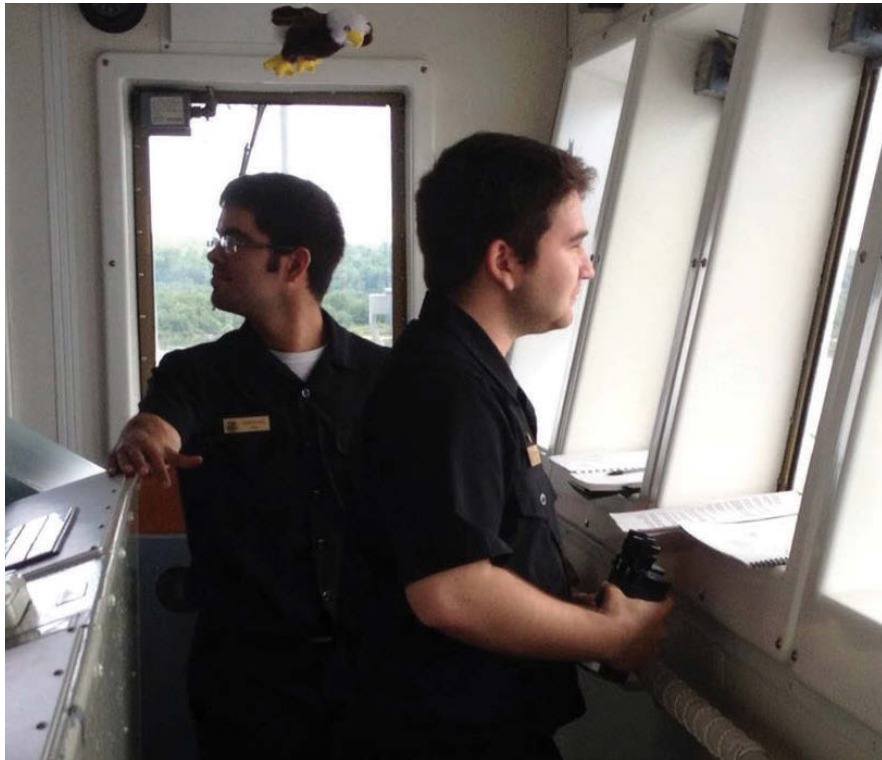
By offering the sea year opportunity, the nation’s maritime companies enhance the quality of the workforce responsible for crucial trade and transportation in support of American companies and the jobs they provide. The demand for maritime jobs is growing at 9 percent, a faster pace than other industries on average, requiring more mariners to receive the best training as efficiently as possible.

“We are committed to providing cadets the best possible training and experiences as they prepare to join the U.S. Merchant Marine,” said Rudy Leming, Crowley’s vice president of labor relations. “The students’ sea year terms allow them to gain significant, practical experience on ships while furthering



In 2016, 140 students worked onboard Crowley ships as part of the sea year program. The opportunity to be in a professional maritime atmosphere, learning while working around experienced mariners, enhances the preparedness of cadets – and their appeal to employers. It provides focused experience at sea, instead of training on a school vessel among a large group of students. Because the program helps further develop young mariners as the industry grows, Crowley is highly invested in supporting the program, providing opportunities aboard its ships,

Above: Sea year offers cadets like Raymond Vant hands on-training aboard ships. Here, Vant prepares to begin his second commercial project out on the Great Lakes in Traverse City, Mich. **Left:** Cadet Daniel Tuten talks on the radio to dock personnel to confirm the rate of crude oil coming onto the tank vessel during cargo transfer operations.



Left: Cadet Raymond Vant gains valuable experience piloting the *TS State of Michigan*, a Great Lakes Maritime Academy training ship. **Below:** Cadet Daniel Tuten manages the loading of ship stores by crane from the stern of a tanker.

are a prime choice for many recruits, the company strives to match cadets to Crowley core values like safety, high performance and integrity.

“Recruiters and employers can see a difference in the confidence level of cadets that had the privilege of working on a commercial cruise versus those who sailed on a training ship,” explained Terpenning.

Support for the sea year program fits Crowley’s investment in other maritime-related educational programs like scholarships, which have totaled more than \$3 million since 1984. One of the requirements to receive the Thomas B. Crowley Sr. Memorial Scholarship at a maritime academy is to serve as a cadet on a Crowley vessel.

“Commercial shipping is a privilege,” said Zoe Goss, director of marine

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their education. They learn first-hand how our commitment to safety and high performance as core values translates aboard a working ship.”

Each academy’s sea year requirements vary. In general, a sea term is the 90 to 120 days that cadets spend aboard a commercial ship, during which cadets must complete a mandatory sea project to graduate and prepare for the licensing exam required to be an officer in the merchant marine. The project has several components, designed for each cadet to ensure that skills learned in academy classrooms are applied to a cadet’s shipboard experience. For example, one part of the project may require an engineering cadet to trace and map out the systems and equipment in the engine room.

► The Historical Perspective

The selection process for cadets to apply for sea year begins at their academies. Each academy has a distinct selection process, where they identify which students qualify to cadet ship with companies, based on grade point average and other reviews.

Jenny Terpenning, supervisor, marine recruiting for Crowley, identifies available positions on Crowley vessels and supplies those opportunities to academies. Once academies provide a list of eligible candidates, Terpenning then processes the paperwork needed for a cadet to sail. While Crowley vessels





Sea year participants, like Cassandra Palma pictured here, gain significant experience and knowledge whether they are on a vessel or off, as is the case here where a ship is undergoing maintenance at a shipyard.

“ The students’ experiences allow them to gain significant, practical experience on ships while furthering their education.”

development, a graduate of MMA who participated in sea year. “Whether it’s working on a training ship or sailing commercial, each ship offers something different and very distinctive in sailing style, both of which give cadets unique understandings toward their sea year project.”

Palma credited sea year for her career success. The captain of *Pelican State* nominated her for the Maritime Academy Recruiting Assistance Program through the American Maritime Officers (AMO) union. Working through Crowley’s program, she received a guaranteed job with the company following graduation.

“At every evolution, Crowley has made me a stronger third mate,” Palma said.

▶ **The Sea Year Experience Adds Skills**

Any cadet can sail on a ship, but it takes the right training to become an extraordinary sailor. Sea year participants swear by the program’s opportunities to enhance a mariner’s development using real-world training. A well-trained cadet will become a well-trained officer through the information and skills that are gleaned onboard, not

Bonnie Muchnick, performs a maintenance check on the hull of Crowley-managed product tanker *MT Florida*, where tugboats typically push, when the ship is being docked.



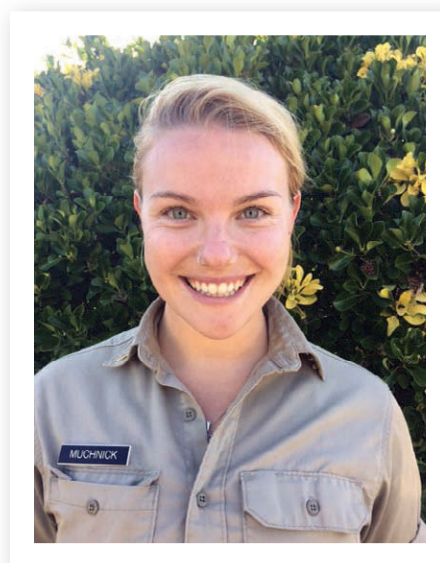
just in the classroom, said Raymond Vant, a senior at GLMA. He learned how to stand watch and the essential routines: logging positions, keeping a lookout, operating the radar, and logging the weather aboard Crowley-managed vessel *St. Louis Express* in the fall of 2015.

“I was given the conn in traffic, and was allowed to make decisions with feedback from both the captain and the mate,” said Vant, who is from New Jersey. “When not on the bridge, the bosun taught me how to maintain the ship. I chipped and painted almost every day. This gave me an appreciation for tasks that I likely wouldn’t do as a mate, but would possibly be supervising. This also creates an appreciation for safety.”

Cadets start out doing paperwork and shadowing mates or engineers. Cadets are expected to arrive early and pay attention – the path to earning more responsibility and duties.

Onboard the Crowley-managed product tanker *MT Pennsylvania* as a junior, recent CMA grad Daniel Tuten learned how to best run a petroleum tanker, including preventative maintenance

that went beyond what he would have learned on a training ship. Currently a third mate on the Crowley-managed product tanker *MT Golden State*, Tuten learned how the tight knit crews aboard commercial ships foster teamwork and accountability. The commercial



vessels often operate with 25-member crews, a fraction of the number of students aboard training ships, where responsibilities are narrower. Onboard the academy’s training

ship there are 300 or more people. Cadets rotate through watch standing, classroom, day work and simulated exercises.

Bonnie Muchnick began her sea year on the CMA’s *Golden Bear* training ship before completing her commercial cruise during the summer of 2016 with Crowley on the managed product tanker *MT Florida*, which enhanced her education by teaching hands-on skills such as loading and discharging crude oil and safety operations with professional mariners.

“Without Crowley’s commercial cruise, I would not have all of the references and knowledge I have today,” said Muchnick, who is completing her senior year at CMA.

 **Learn more about...**
Crowley’s Support of Maritime Academy Cadets at crowley.com/cadets

Left: Crowley has provided cadets like Bonnie Muchnick with scholarships and hands-on experience working on company owned, or managed, vessels. Real world experience is critical to becoming a safe and highly competent merchant mariner.