

Emerging Leader Award

Michelle L. Nakamura

U.S. Navy

Lt. Cmdr. Michelle L. Nakamura is a nuclear surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy and a 1997 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. After graduation, she completed Surface Warfare Officer School and reported to the USS Vella Gulf. As strike officer, Ensign Nakamura supervised 15 personnel in the operation and maintenance of all shipboard missile and gunnery systems. She achieved her officer of the deck and surface warfare officer qualifications in record time. As officer of the deck, she was directly responsible to the commanding officer for safety of the ship, and demonstrated exceptional understanding of fluid dynamics and their effects on the ship's movements.

Following her first tour, Nakamura reported to Charleston, S.C., for six months of advanced Naval Nuclear Power School, followed by six months of nuclear prototype training. She earned a master's degree in engineering management from Old Dominion

University in 2004, and in 2009 was selected to attend the Naval War College to pursue a master's in national security.

She has served on several different ships, providing the highest level of technical, operations, and personnel leadership, often in demanding and difficult circumstances. Her second assignment was Reactor Electrical and Reactor Controls Division officer, USS Nimitz. She led 80 personnel in the operation and maintenance of two nuclear power plant electrical and power generation systems. As diversity liaison officer, chief of naval personnel, she was responsible for diversity accessions and retention for both active duty and reserve Navy forces. She was



CITATION:

For demonstrated leadership in systems engineering, and for setting a fine example as an officer, a mentor, and an engineer.

operations officer on the USS Cole, orchestrating the ship's employment and supervising 85 personnel in operation and maintenance of all the ship's weapons, radar, and navigation systems. In this capacity, she ensured successful completion of all pre-deployment training exercises for a six-month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf and rapidly qualified to be tactical action officer. In her most recent assignment as reactor training assistant on the USS Carl Vinson, Nakamura provided management, technical supervision, and oversight for all training for the maintenance and operation of two nuclear power plants and associated systems.

Nakamura's record of leadership in community involvement is also compelling. As the most senior female surface nuclear warfare officer during her last three assignments, she provided guidance to other female officers and engineers. She is an active part of the Navy's mentoring network for female

nuclear officers. At the request of SWE sections at the University of Texas at Austin and Pennsylvania State University, Nakamura has spoken about the Navy's nuclear power program. She has been praised for her candid presentations about opportunities for women in engineering. Her continued record of performance resulted in her recent selection for the executive officer/commanding officer pipeline.

Nakamura has been awarded five Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals and one Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. She is married to Lt. Cmdr. Justin Hodges, also a nuclear surface warfare officer, and has a 4-year-old daughter, Olivia.