

President William J. Brennan
Faculty and Staff Welcome
2016-2017 Academic Year
August 26, 2016

I'd like to welcome you all to a new academic year and to those of you who are just joining us, I welcome you to the Maine Maritime Academy community. We have accomplished many things together and have received a number of accolades for our combined efforts. The reputation of Maine Maritime Academy as a college that provides a high quality and valuable education is testament to our ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to evolve as necessary by offering programs that are relevant, while still remaining true to our original purpose and mission of preparing young people for success.

In the message I sent out to faculty and staff last week, I told you I would like to begin this new academic year by sharing with the campus community, in much the same way as my town hall meetings, some new endeavors that relate to our strategic plan and I'd like to use my welcome address today for that purpose.

In my 2011 State of the Academy report, I pledged to review the current governance of the Maine Maritime Academy and propose an internal organizational structure to enable greater stakeholder involvement in the decisions that would affect the future of the Academy. I said at the time that I believe this matter underlies all our efforts to enhance the opportunity for Maine Maritime Academy to continue to be successful.

In my view, all of our stakeholders deserve a meaningful opportunity to participate in issues that are critical to the welfare of the institution. That means a process through which they know that their views have been heard. That does not mean that all issues presented will be acted upon or that we will always agree with one another about what can or should be done. But enlightened leadership recognizes the value of diverse opinions, effective leadership is inclusive, and it encourages contrary opinions and strives to resolve issues collaboratively.

In line with my 2011 directive, we eliminated the old Executive Committee and replaced it with a two-tiered approach to decision-making that involves the vice presidents as part of a leadership team and an Academy Council comprised of the senior administrative leaders of the college. The Academy Council's makeup provides balanced representation for the entire institution. Its mission is to enable department directors and budget managers to participate in the strategic and tactical decision-making process for Maine Maritime Academy.

Over the past couple of years since it was established, the Academy Council has assumed a significant role in the management of the college, including policy formulation, budgeting and strategic planning. The planning process we've developed is not static, bound in a notebook and sitting on a shelf as is so often the case. We have adopted a process engineering approach to our planning that continuously reviews, as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, programming, budgeting and execution, where we stand relative to our plans. We validate on an ongoing basis the plans that guide us and we modify as necessary our approach to ensure that we are improving continuously.

The Council has enabled the transparency and the kind of informed decision making that a contemporary organization demands. This decision-making process enables greater coordination between functional units. It also encourages communication of information that is important to the effective management of the institution. It establishes appropriate levels of consideration for certain issues, and it provides for consistent review and understanding of matters benefitting from collaboration.

It is now time, in my estimation, to expand our planning capacity to further enhance our decision coordination process so that there is a more formalized approach to planning. With a more formalized approach, we will be able to both analyze and evaluate our plans and programs.

Accordingly, I am announcing today the establishment of the College Advisory Team. The team is comprised of six members: Lisa Roy, Nate Gandy, Jen DeJoy, Don Maier, Deidra Davis, and Sue Loomis. This team represents more of the connective tissue I've talked about previously as these team members are well positioned to communicate horizontally and vertically within the organization. The College Advisory Team will provide input to leadership on issues of concern to the college community and opportunities for organizational development. They will also lead us in the implementation of organization-wide planning.

As mundane as planning may be to some, it is something that we all need to involve ourselves with to ensure that we appropriately and assertively allocate and use our limited resources. And to be involved means to be informed, which is why I continue to work to develop an open and transparent institution built upon effective and collaborative management. Our management process becomes stronger each year, enabling open assessment of various priorities and candid discussion about their merits relative to the overall mission of the college. As an organization, we need to embrace planning as part of our daily routines, to work toward our goals, and to feel the satisfaction of achieving them. It's my goal to help us to change our institutional culture to be more adaptive to change, and to do that, we need to know what we are reaching for every day, and to work toward it.

In general terms, our process should encourage MMA employees to become better informed about campus initiatives, so that we can be more proactive and less reactive. I want all of our employees to understand both the big picture and each individual's role in it. With this new process to be facilitated by the College Advisory Team, it is my hope that we will achieve efficiencies with less redundancy in the expenditure of time and money and that our culture will shift over time to one that embraces planning and more effective communication as a normal part of everyday business.

Don and Lisa will be making a presentation to the Academy Council next Wednesday to describe the process that the College Advisory Team has created. They will talk through the stages of the process, the timeline, and the outcomes we all will be working toward. They are putting together a dedicated section of the website for materials and information, and you'll be hearing more about this in the coming days and weeks. We are all going to be involved in this planning process, and ultimately achieving the goals of the strategic plan together, and I am looking forward to working with you to move the process forward.

As we move into the new academic year, you—as faculty and staff—have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students. I envy the role that many of you have as mine is much more remote, but it is no less passionate about their success. All of us are here to ensure that our students get the most out of their time at the academy. The optics of the Convocation are not accidental. We may all have many different tasks, but we all have one job and that is to help our students on the road to success.

As we begin a new academic year, I want to thank you for what you do and to wish us all well in the year ahead as we strive to do the best we can for our students.