



Faculty and Staff Welcome  
2017-2018 Academic Year  
August 25, 2017

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 by offering programs that are relevant, while still remaining true to our original purpose and mission of preparing young people for success.

Last year in my welcoming remarks to staff and faculty, I told you that we were expanding our planning capacity to further enhance our decision coordination process and to implement a more formalized approach to planning. At that time I announced the formation of the College Advisory Team to lead us in the implementation of organization-wide planning.

I want to thank you for being fully engaged in that process and I want to thank the College Advisory Team for all their good work, which continues today and will continue throughout the academic year. As mundane as planning may be to some, it is something that we all need to be involved in 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 toward an open and transparent institution built upon effective and collaborative management.

It is my goal to ensure that all of our stakeholders have a meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions that are critical to the welfare of our institution. The welfare of our institution and of our students is also impacted by exogenous factors. Later in this workshop, you will hear from Michael Wittman, who will talk about gender bias and how advocates and allies can use their privileges to further gender equity. This is an important message and I look forward to his presentation and the discussion it will generate.

But right now, I'd like to talk about a privilege broader than that which Michael will address – that is the privilege, as in the opportunity, that we have to help our students succeed, not just here on campus, or in the classroom, or in their careers, but hopefully in their lives. On Monday during my convocation speech, I will raise issues that I bring up annually and that I believe are important for our students to understand and embrace. I will point out that every person here contributes to their success, no matter the task, and that there is not one of us who wouldn't hesitate to lend them a helping hand.

I will tell them that our convocation tradition embraces a fundamental purpose of pledging to uphold an honor system, which is essential to our mission. I will tell them that the word "honor" at Maine Maritime Academy has come to encompass honesty, integrity, truthfulness, tolerance, accountability and the acceptance of the underlying equality of all humans; that the word, honor, is the recognition that we all must take personal responsibility for our actions.

I will tell them that it is my hope that the education they receive and the experiences they gain while at Maine Maritime Academy will expand their capacity for critical thinking. I will tell them that critical thinking is weighing competing ideas and that balancing a spectrum of ideas requires tolerance. That to disagree with someone is OK, but to do so disrespectfully is not. Personal insults and disparagement do not contribute to substantive ideas and constructive problem solving.

I will tell them that it is my hope that they will inform themselves in order to make their own decisions, and take responsibility for their own actions. I will tell them that we are a civil and decent society; that we listen before rushing to judgement, and we evaluate others not by their skin color, or ethnic background, or sexual preferences, or religious beliefs, or political party. And I will tell them that there is no place in our society for the hate that was recently displayed so tragically in Charlottesville, Virginia.

I know that, in the face of what's going on in this country of late, you like me, may be asking yourself, how do we foster in our students respect for self and others, and help them maintain standards to conduct themselves with civility – with basic decency – in the classroom, in their personal communication, and in their collective discussions. You may wonder, as I do, what are the boundaries of free speech and how do we, as teachers and mentors and leaders, help our students to understand those boundaries?

It is not my role or intent to set anyone's personal compass, but I can help guide you. We have a code of ethics and our policy on political activities also speaks to this theme of how we use the opportunity that we have in helping our students to recognize their role as members of a civil and decent society. Clarification around the difficult concept of free speech and actions in the classroom can also be found stated in our policy on free speech and orderly operations. We worked collectively on those policies last year and they are important reference and guidance for all of us, but if after reviewing these policies you have concerns, I urge you to reach out and we can work to address those concerns together.

Public colleges occupy a unique place in society. They are institutions of higher learning dedicated to the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and, in that capacity, they assign a high priority to the freedom of speech. At the same time, they are governmental entities that must balance that important freedom with other legitimate goals and objectives, including the maintenance of a safe, lawful and orderly environment.

As this next semester begins, I wish you well in all that you do, and I thank you for your dedication. You and I have an incredible opportunity to leave an indelible impression on these students that will benefit society, and I am pleased to share in that opportunity with you.