



Faculty and Staff Workshop
January 10, 2020

I want to welcome you back for the second semester. I hope you've had a restorative break, and I wish you health, happiness and much success in the year ahead. I'll admit that I needed the break as these past 6 months have been very challenging for a number of reasons, but I'm taking to heart the ophthalmological sense of 2020 and looking towards the year ahead with a clear vision for the future.

In preparing my remarks, I asked several of our co-workers for their thoughts about themes and messages that would be helpful for me to share as we start off the new semester. I was struck by the commonality in many of the responses and it occurred to me that perhaps I'm not the only one who felt this past semester had been challenging.

There seemed to be sort of an attitudinal disconnect, perhaps a collective amnesia such that we overlooked the fact that we are indeed all in this together. That we need to work collaboratively, support each other and treat each other with respect.

I feel strongly that the measure of an institution is in how it treats people, each and every day. I work to foster an attitude here that is caring and one that demonstrates respect for people, both within and outside the institution. That is the attitude I want Maine Maritime Academy to be defined by and I believe you share that view.

I'd like to start off the New Year demonstrating to our new colleagues that we are pleased to have them join us, by announcing their arrival and, in the future, we'll send out a community message introducing each of our new employees when they join MMA. Perhaps you can help foster that spirit of unity today by sitting at lunch with someone you may not know. Learn about their role and how to work together for success. It's true we all wear different hats here, but we all share the same goal of providing our students with the best learning environment possible.

What we do and how we do it, what we say, and where, and to whom we say it can have a significant impact upon our jobs. While I know that we all do not share the same motivations for why we come to work each day, I know you care deeply about this institution.

I am always impressed to see the learning, the problem-solving, and the accomplishments that come from our working together. Your support and engagement with students in the classroom, in Curtis Hall, on the field, aboard ships, in our labs, on our waterfront, in the administrative offices, and all over this campus, is not only essential for their experience here, but it's also an investment in the present and the future of MMA.

Maine Maritime Academy is a unique college, certainly unique here in the State of Maine and that has been one of our strengths. But occupying such a unique niche within the higher education marketplace is also one of our weaknesses, especially being in a state that has not made a strong connection between higher education and economic success.

As I contemplate the year ahead, and think about the long-term future of Maine Maritime Academy, there are several things that I am focused on. Are we adequately prepared to adapt to changing circumstances and undertake the effort that will be necessary to alter course as circumstances demand? Are we sufficiently aware, engaged and willing to do what is necessary to ensure Maine Maritime Academy is sustainable?

Over the past several years, we have achieved much success, but there are challenges that lie ahead. In a world of rapidly changing economic and financial circumstances, public institutions of higher education like Maine Maritime Academy have, of necessity, become less reliant upon traditional sources of support, and now must operate more like a private college.

We must become more adept at developing alternative means to advance and that might just mean we should challenge the status quo. We must become more creative in our use of resources including our facilities and our assets, both in the way they serve the Academy as well as the way in which they impact the broader community.

It is the nature of business and industry to either keep up or be left behind. This pertains to us, too, and to our curriculum and our programs. We need to retain the high quality and relevance of our academic programs here on campus by keeping up with new knowledge, technology and instructional techniques. We need to be nimble and adaptable.

We cannot see ourselves as merely caretakers of the status quo, we need to be dynamic, we have to advance, and, as the rate of change in our fields of endeavors accelerates, we need to keep pace or we will be left behind.

As I addressed in my email message just prior to the break, there were several personnel changes that took place in late 2019. Dr. Gardner resigned and Professor Mark Cote has agreed to take on the role of acting Provost while we undertake a search for a new Vice President for Academic Affairs. We have already taken steps to initiate that search and I'll keep you apprised of developments.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Mark Cote for his willingness to step forward to help MMA, his alma mater, during this difficult transition and I ask you to extend to Mark the courtesy of your support as he takes on this challenging role.

As some of you are aware, there were questions raised during the last semester about the delivery and content of some courses associated with the license program. These matters were reviewed by outside counsel and satisfactorily addressed with the U.S. Coast Guard.

I thank those of you who were involved in helping me address this difficult and troubling matter. While I consider it to be behind us, I do believe that we need to be vigilant about protecting the quality and integrity of our programs and those of us who have the burden of responsibility for those programs cannot be complacent.

Prior to the break, I also let you know that Alan Chace has been hired as the Director of the Center for Professional Mariner Development and will begin in February. He comes to us with just the kind of background and experience this new venture needs and I am very pleased we have been able to find someone of his caliber.

Creating an ancillary source of revenue as we are doing through CPMD is a means of supporting today's students and those of the future. It is all part of the evolution and transformation that Maine Maritime Academy must undertake to be sustainable. The building we have purchased at the former mill site in

Bucksport is being refurbished with new carpeting and a fresh coat of paint, but it is a wonderful facility and I hope you will all take an opportunity to visit the facility once it's open, and that should be very soon.

The search process for the new Vice President for Financial and Institutional Services continues and I hope to fill the position of Director of Career Services soon. I mentioned in my earlier message to the community that Capt. Tim Leach, the former Career Services Director, is lending a hand to the department during this critical period and I am grateful that Tim, another MMA alumnus, is going above and beyond, like Mark Cote, in supporting his alma mater.

And, I'll wrap the personnel announcements up by congratulating Amy Gutow, who has been selected as our new Registrar, filling the position vacated when Christina Stephens left to advance her career at the University of Maine.

I'd like to take just a moment to comment about one of the items on today's agenda – a safety culture. I recently was in Houston visiting with senior leaders at the American Bureau of Shipping, which has undergone a significant evolution towards the development of a culture of safety throughout the organization.

It became an imperative for them because it has become, of necessity, an imperative for the industries ABS certifies. I believe that imperative calls upon us, too, and I hope that you embrace what Peter Stewart, Kirk Langford and Sandy Cameron have to say. It is an imperative for us as employers and employees, and it is imperative for us as educators who are sending graduates out into industries that assert that safety is to be part of an employee's DNA.

Frankly, I think it can also help this college deal with some of the post-teenage risk-taking behavior of our students if looking out for each other and helping one another is something that truly becomes ingrained and forefront when they're driving, or partying, or engaged in risky social interactions, and the one-hundred-and-one other things that give us reason to be concerned for their welfare.

So now, I want to close by reflecting on what I said at the outset: that we are all in this together. We are, all of us, programmatically intertwined, and while some things have changed, our strategic plan and goals are still front and center and stand at the core of what we are about; providing our students with the best learning environment possible.

We must be certain that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the programs and actions undertaken are relevant and aligned with our mission. And we need to ensure that the people necessary to achieving the pertinent goals and objectives are working successfully to achieve those goals and objectives.

Without students, we have no reason to exist. We must focus on relevant programming, which positively impacts admissions, and sufficient philanthropy, which positively impacts admissions. Outdated programs will jeopardize our placement, and that will negatively affect admissions. Developing an ancillary source of income makes more money available, which will positively affect admissions.

Again, without students we have no reason to exist, so if we are working the way we should be, we are working as a team in support of each student every day at Maine Maritime Academy. If we are not addressing the challenges ahead together, we are going to be confronted with very difficult choices to make in the future. I do believe we can be successful, and time is of the essence.