



Faculty and Staff Workshop
January 8, 2021

I cannot begin without acknowledging what has taken place in this country this week. I spent a good portion of my career in work that caused me to be in that building in DC and in the offices we saw on Wednesday, stormed and abused by seditious rioters. My view of that event is, like yours, framed by my personal experience. I am ashamed. I am disgusted. I am deeply troubled. But I am confident that we are better than that which we saw on display and that we as a society will look hard at those events and see anew that we bear a responsibility to make our place better. To treat each other with decency, honor and respect. Please consider my remarks that follow to be a plea that you help do for our country what you have done for MMA and for our students.

In years past, I would open my remarks by welcoming you back for the second semester, expressing my hope that you have had a restorative break, and wishing you success with the semester ahead. Last year, I referred to 2020 in an ophthalmological sense looking to a clear vision for the future – my goodness, was I wrong as there was definitely nothing clear about 2020 other than it was bad.

I do welcome you back and I hope the break was restorative as it was an arduous challenge to conduct last semester as we did. Somehow though, it just does not seem fitting for me to address you today as I have in the past with comments about our niche within the higher education marketplace, the nature of our business, strategic planning, budgets, and the like. While I am consumed with thoughts about the long-term health of this college, I am nevertheless focused on the immediacy of short-term decision-making necessitated by management in a pandemic world.

What I do feel it is appropriate to say this morning is that the measure of an institution is in how it treats people, each and every day, and I would like to think that we have demonstrated, more this past year than ever before, an attitude here that is caring, and that we have taken important steps to demonstrate 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 read recently in an opinion piece regarding the old year that the calendar didn't cause the calamity of the pandemic and the calendar won't make it disappear; what will happen depends upon humans. While I recognize that the commentator was speaking in a global sense, it struck me that what happened here this past year and especially this past semester was due to people, all of you -- our faculty and staff, who in true Mariner spirit, supported one another and supported the community in this most extraordinary challenge. I believe that what took place this past semester will be transformative for Maine Maritime Academy. Did we achieve all the success we envisioned and in the way we envisioned it? Perhaps not, but we achieved something together that was remarkable and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for how you embraced the challenge and for how you supported the Academy and our students.

There are so many here who contributed to our success in so many ways, that it's not practical to try and bring special recognition to them all, but I do want to single out one individual. Mark

Cote has helped guide this institution as a member of the faculty, as a department head, as the Senate President, for the past year as its Provost, and in so many other ways over many years. There was no more emphatic demonstration of his affection for his alma mater than the way he handled his role as a part of the executive team this past year, expressing under difficult circumstances the views and values of the college and, helping us internally to find our way through many thickets. He has been a strong voice in a soft and thoughtful way, encouraging us to find the correct path forward no matter how challenging the issue.

As you know, Mark retired at the end of the year and it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity now to formally introduce Dr. Keith Williamson, our new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Keith brings bring over 30 years' experience to the position, including several years in academic leadership roles and many years of teaching experience in the field of engineering with numerous relationships in business incubation and innovation. He also has extensive funded and sponsored research experience as principal investigator and collaborator. Prior to working in academia, Keith worked for a number of years as a mechanical engineer, electronics engineer, and project manager for the U.S. Navy.

Keith's experience with, and understanding of aligned technology programs with ABET standards; expanded industry engagement; his mentoring experience with faculty and support of their professional development; and his interest in networking and collaborative partnerships is exactly what MMA needs at this point in our history. I am extremely pleased to have a professional of his caliber become a member of our leadership team.

The collegial relationship between Mark and Keith and the spirit of comradery in which they worked over the past several months is a testament to the type of people they are, and I am confident that we will begin this new year with a seamless leadership transition.

Let me close my remarks by reflecting on what I said in the past: 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. But most importantly, we have dedicated people who demonstrated this past semester their capacity to address challenge and to do so with the best interests of the college and our students at heart. And so, as I welcome you back and wish you well in the semester ahead, I say thank you for all you have do to make us as successful as we can be.

Thank you.