



CAL MARITIME

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Message from the President
November 15, 2021

Dear Cadets, Faculty, and Staff--

Please see the remarks from this morning's address to the Corps of Cadets.

Good morning,

I am joining you this morning to discuss some incidents in our profession and on our campus that are causing all of us - faculty, staff, cadets, alumni and beyond - to take a deeper look at ourselves and our maritime culture.

Like the other six US maritime academies, Cal Maritime operates with a set of values and standards that are intentional. These values and standards are generally timeless, and they are critical to your long-term success as a maritime professional. We purposely hold our cadets to academic standards, grooming standards, professional standards and behavioral standards. We expect more, not less, from our cadets in professional standards because you are headed to a profession that demands you be ready on arrival. We expect more, not less, from our cadets in behavioral standards because you are headed to roles and responsibilities in high-expectation environments that will demand your very best in leadership presence.

While professional standards are derived from USCG guidance, our behavioral standards originate from somewhere else - our academy values. Fundamentally, our academy values of dedication, honor, integrity, respect, responsibility, and trust should be present in every conversation, action, thought and decision we make. These enduring values, lived properly, create a culture on campus and, ultimately, within the maritime profession - wherever our graduates choose to serve. Our values should be our guideposts.

Our academy values also create foundations of teamwork - including the idea that we accept and deliberately include everyone who wants to be part of the Corps of Cadets. By this I mean that everyone standing on this quad is qualified to be here, everyone standing on this quad was expressly selected to be a part of our academy and a part of our maritime profession, and everyone standing on this quad belongs here - period. Every person here - of any race, of any income level, of any sexual orientation or gender expression, of any political belief - belongs here. These attributes I've just listed are neither qualifying nor disqualifying to be a cadet - they are descriptions of an individual's humanity. Everyone is here because they are qualified, selected and want to be here - therefore they belong.

There have been a number of recent incidents in our maritime profession and on our campus where our shared values have been violated. The reported rape of Midshipman X from Kings Point is one horrific example, and it highlighted sexual assault and sexual harassment within the profession, directed principally at women. As I shared with you at an earlier formation, we need a persistent, broad effort across the profession to put an end to this. Over the last three weeks, I have personally conferred with Department of Transportation Secretary Polly Trottenberg, Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lesley, the state maritime academy presidents, the Kings' Point Superintendent, shipping industry leaders, and labor union officials to create real change in the experience of our cadets going to sea - and a lasting change in the maritime profession's culture. I believe that this group of leaders has crafted an effective set of strategies to do just that - and I expect we will begin implementation of several initiatives and actions as early as December 1st. Our campus leaders in academics, cadet leadership and development and marine programs will be engaged in the process as we move forward.

We too, here at our academy, have had violations of our values - on board our training ship and landside. These deplorable incidents have spurred strong campus concern for our culture, concerns I share. The most recent incident is especially troubling because, while it occurred within constitutionally-protected free speech which I will defend for everyone at our academy, it was disrespectful and denigrating to the very people who are part of our maritime campus community - human beings who are qualified, were selected, and who belong here.

In particular, I was extremely discouraged to read a text conversation between our cadets with words expressed that are offensive, spiteful and highly disappointing. I am grateful to our cadets who put forward the ASCMA resolution regarding the uniform and grooming standards, as this is a sign that they care about the academy. I strongly reject the statements that implied that the cadets who supported the resolution are not welcome at this institution and do not belong here or in a career in the maritime industry. To the contrary, I fully support and stand with the members of our community who identify as nonbinary, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. LGBTQ cadets, faculty and staff belong here, which means the academy values them as full members and gains strength from them. In turn, the academy counts equally on all its members to uphold the academy's values.

As you go about your busy days in the next week, I know you'll be thinking about the short Thanksgiving break ahead. I wish you safe travels if you are headed home. I also have another wish - that you will be thankful for the opportunity to be at Cal Maritime, that you will be thankful for the many diverse and unique classmates, faculty and staff members on this campus who are enriching your campus experience, and that you return to campus with a renewed commitment to creating tremendous, safe, and inclusive campus and maritime workplace cultures that will make us very proud to be part of the maritime profession.

Thank you.

In service, TC



Thomas A. Cropper

President

California State University Maritime Academy