

Subject: Building Toward a Stronger Cal Maritime: Establishing an “Opt-In” Corps of Cadets
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From: President of CSU Maritime Academy
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CAL MARITIME

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

April 2, 2024

BUILDING TOWARD A STRONGER CAL MARITIME
Establishing an “Opt-In” Corps of Cadets

Dear Members of the Cal Maritime Community,

Since my arrival to Cal Maritime eight months ago as Interim President, one of my highest priorities has been listening and learning from a broad range of perspectives about this institution. I have been walking the campus regularly to build connections with our incredible students, I have also listened to individual faculty members, the Senate Executive Committee, deans, and staff, and considered input from contributors to the Rapid Action Working Group. I have also participated in class discussions, attended as many Keelhauler athletic events as possible, talked with parents and other supporters, met with alumni from every decade, discussed workforce needs with employers and labor representatives, and engaged with federal, state, and local leaders about Cal Maritime, our cadets and graduate students, and the industries we serve.

Everyone I meet cares deeply about this institution – our proud heritage; our critical role in developing the next generation of maritime and STEM professionals; and the urgency to put Cal Maritime on a sustainable path forward, to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving maritime industry and supply the workforce of the future.

Our Current State

During my tenure I have been candid and transparent about the fiscal, operational, and campus culture challenges we face. There are many factors at play: steadily declining enrollment; national demographic shifts shrinking the prospective student pool; ensuring safety and inclusion for all students; and the ever-increasing costs of maintaining a preeminent, cutting-edge STEM curriculum. To navigate these challenges, we must work together with positive intent, consider broader institutional needs beyond individual interests, and take pragmatic

actions to stabilize the foundation that makes Cal Maritime so remarkable.

We must build a path towards achieving a larger student body, to maintain a robust academic and student experience for all, while we operate at the scale commensurate with our organizational structure and our commitment to the CSU system.

Evolving to Attract Future Students

After much research and analysis, I have concluded we need to adjust our approach to what we offer students seeking a university experience and a Cal Maritime education. To that end, starting with the Fall 2024 semester, we will begin accepting students in non-license track majors with no requirement to be in the Corps of Cadets. There will be no change for students pursuing a U.S. Coast Guard license program; because of federal regulations, as part of their degree they must be enrolled in the Corps of Cadets, adhering to all existing requirements.

Current cadets and future students who choose not to pursue a U.S. Coast Guard license yet seek the structure and leadership training that the Corps of Cadets offers may join the Corps of Cadets. These 'opt-in' cadets will be required to participate in and abide by all the Corps of Cadets rules and regulations, including wearing a uniform, standing watch, and participating in Corps activities. And although students outside of license-track majors will no longer be required to be in the Corps of Cadets, they will have to abide by a standardized dress code that upholds the standards and reputation of Cal Maritime. Our dress code for students not in the Corps of Cadets will continue to set the standard of our professional environment and expectations of all Cal Maritime students. More on this will be forthcoming shortly.

There are benefits to Cal Maritime providing both regimented and non-regimented pathways in maritime education:

- First, we must continue to foster a diverse learning environment to enhance students' learning by exposing them to a variety of experiences, ideas, and perspectives. Learning alongside peers who have chosen non-regimented pathways will enrich the educational experience for our license-track cadets, mirroring practices at several other state maritime academies. This equips all students with the adaptability necessary for success in a wide range of careers.
- Second, we must recognize that not all careers in the maritime industry require or benefit from regimented training. Students aspiring to roles in maritime management, policy, marine science, engineering, and other non-licensed positions may find regimentation unnecessary or even hindering to their career development. By offering flexible pathways, we ensure that students with diverse career goals can access our exceptional programs and benefit from the invaluable experience of studying and collaborating with peers on a similar educational journey at Cal Maritime.

I recognize this decision reflects a change from our long-standing operating model. However, as both a state maritime academy and a part of the California State University system, we are positioned between two meaningful missions. This change allows us to sustain the maritime academy experience while also evolving and growing to meet the needs of others who would benefit from the Cal Maritime educational experience. We will continue to address the pressing need for USCG-licensed mariners, while also fulfilling our commitment to providing access to quality education for a diverse range of learners, particularly California residents.

We must each remember that Cal Maritime, like the other five state maritime academies, exists primarily to provide qualified, educated licensed civilian mariner officers to the merchant marine and other employers in the maritime field and related industries who desperately need our graduates. But we are also funded by taxpayers to increase educational access and opportunity for California's students. I do not feel those two mandates are in conflict. We know higher education is one of the greatest engines of social and economic transformation in our country. To that end, CSU and Cal Maritime remain deeply committed to keeping the doors of opportunity open to talented and driven students of all backgrounds. This change is yet another milestone that reinforces our commitment.

We're In This Together

Please know that I acknowledge that there are many particulars and procedural steps that will need to be decided in the weeks ahead and the leadership team is fully focused on how to make the transition as smooth as possible. We will release additional details on this transition in the coming weeks and will be posting a fact sheet on our website that will answer many questions. I ask each of you to be mindful of how you communicate to others the reason for this change and fully explain the enrollment challenges we face.

We are all stewards of Cal Maritime's future success. We are stronger when we work together toward our shared goals of sustaining and growing this special university for many generations to come. I ask for your continued support and partnership to be part of leading Cal Maritime toward its thriving future. Thank you.

Michael J. Dumont, J.D.

Interim President



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