

**Convocation:
Thursday 20 August, 2015
1430-Leamy Auditorium**

RADM Thomas, Commodore Melera (board of trustee members)
Distinguished Visitors, Alumni, Faculty, & Staff, past and present, Auxiliary,
Reserves, Retirees, Corps of Cadets, Good afternoon...it is wonderful to see
everyone here together today...my first Convocation Address as your
Superintendent. It's been a great week so far...and we ALL have so much to
look forward to as we start the Academic year.

As I've said all summer...it is truly an honor for me and my bride
Felicitas to have the opportunity to serve here...We feel so very proud,
fortunate, and blessed. "WE REALLY DO LOVE THIS PLACE. It's a
special place...as you know...with a meaningful, feel good, impactful
mission...with impressive young men and women, ALL OF YOU, who are
hungry to learn, grow and serve...a place with a caring, passionate,
professional faculty and staff...a place with great interest and continued
support from our Alumni, Parents Association, and the CG Foundation...and
a place that enjoys strong friendships...and partnerships, right here in "Coast
Guard City New London" as well, throughout the region.

Having been here now for two and a half months, I continue to see this
institution as vibrant, well-run, and highly successful in its endeavor to
educate, train, develop, and inspire "Leaders of Character."

Kudos to our Senior Leaders here...and the faculty and staff from across the Academy community...KUDOS also to each of you within the Corps of Cadets, for doing your part...this place is “ROCKIN” and I congratulate all of you.

In the short couple of months that I’ve been here ...I’ve gathered quite a few Academy Sea Stories...one of which I’d like to share with you now: 29th of June, Reporting-In Day...*a day I know the Class of 2019, might rather forget*)...of course we all know, after the busy-ness of that long, seemingly never-ending day...that included haircuts, uniforms, yelling and screaming, learning indoc, marching, running etc...the day culminates with a Swearing-In Ceremony on the Parade field. A beautiful day...beautiful ceremony...swabs raising their right hand...taking the oath...My welcoming remarks...ceremony ends. It’s now time to allow swabs 10 minutes with their parents before they are whisked away to continue their Swab Summer.

Now, I am not an eyewitness to this...but according to my wife...as the swabs were unleashed to their folks...one Swab... who will remain nameless... ran up to his mom very anxious... quite excitable...somewhat frantic...and said “MOMMA...THIS IS NO JOKE!” and gave her a big hug. (pause)

Although, just like you, I too laughed...but as I laughed... ... I got to thinking... wow...how insightful, how appropriate...how true. True, not just for the young swab and his many classmates...but for the entire Corps...for each of you here today.

Also...how true it is for the faculty and staff of this great Academy... and how very, very true it is for me, as your 41st Superintendent...what I am charged with...my responsibilities...”FOLKS...THIS REALLY IS NO JOKE.” This task at hand...for each of us, as I said...is important, meaningful, and impactful...producing “Leaders of Character,” “Service Ready Ensigns”...getting the Corps...each of you **READY** to serve in the field... safety, security, stewardship of and for our Nation. I encourage each of you to frequently think about why you are here... We each have taken an Oath...to support and defend the Constitution ...to bear true faith and allegiance ...to well and faithfully discharge our duties... As I told the Swabs at their Swearing-In ...**THE OATH**...it’s pretty weighty stuff...that it’s one thing to take an oath... it’s another thing to live it...So **LET’S EACH BE COMMITTED...FOCUSED, AND DETERMINED** today... and throughout the year...to **LIVE THIS OATH AS WE SHOULD... INDIVIDUALLY, AS TEAM...as a COAST GUARD FAMILY!**

Yes...this job of ours is truly **NO JOKE**”...but hear me now, that doesn’t necessarily mean we can’t have fun while getting the job done. As many of you have heard me before... I am a huge believer in a quote I heard years ago:

“To Love What you do...and know that it Matters...

What Could be More Fun.”

There is lots of fun to be had here at the Coast Guard Academy...fun as a Corps...fun as a Community and Family.

As we each go about our business...let's continue to approach our passion in a positive, energetic, enthusiastic manner...doing so, I guarantee we will have even greater experiences of success...we will strengthen our love for what we do...we will better see... and feel... that this stuff REALLY DOES MATTER...we will continue to have responsible, professional, worthwhile FUN!

To the Corps of Cadets...it's great having you all together again... I enjoyed our time together on Tuesday...addressing each of you as a class...reminding you where you are in this 200 week leader development program...and what is expected of you as a class...as Coastguardsmen!

-4/c followers...3/c Role Modelers...2/c Mentors...and 1/C organizational leaders. As I said on Tuesday...appreciate where you are right now... take full advantage of this opportunity to grow academically, athletically, professionally, and ethically...continue striving to do your very best...each and every day...it is your job...your chosen profession...I know you will not let your Nation down.

-To the Class of 2016...271 days til commissioning and graduation... I'm sure you are excited to be near the finish line? From here on out...be true to yourself...and to your Coast Guard...No coasting...Lean Forward...Finish strong...finish successful...READY yourself, as best you can for an adventurous, exciting, and accomplished CG officer career.

-And to every member of the Corps...As classes begin, think about where you are academically? Whether you have been successful to date... or whether you have struggled....**DO NOT** underestimate the value of working to enhance your relationships with faculty and staff. **DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR HELP...GET HELP EARLY AND GET HELP OFTEN.**

A quick shout-out to Faculty/Staff: For many of you welcome back...I hope you had a restful, enjoyable summer! For those that are new...those that I met last week at the New Faculty School orientation, welcome once again! For others who worked throughout the summer months... thank you for all of your support this the summer...It has been a busy summer...a successful summer...thanks for all your hard work.

Now We have a few new Senior staff members that I want to mention...Our new Commandant of Cadets-CAPT Melissa Rivera... Our Personnel/Mission Support Officer-CAPT Dave Burns (both on the Platform)... our new Office of Inclusion and Diversity Director, Dr. Aram DeKoven... our new Information Systems Division Director-CDR Rob Taylor...and our new Comptroller-CDR Francisco Estevez. I look forward to working with them and ask you each to better understand who they are and learn from them as professionals and leaders.

I'm sure a number of you are wondering how I am thinking about the future of this Academy...what I might have my eye on as we collectively move forward from where we are, and where we have been.

Well, as I said...I believe the Academy is in a good place right now...
...As a Board of Trustee member of the Academy, prior to being
Superintendent... I will tell you...I am very fond of, familiar with, and
supportive of The Academy's current Strategic Plan...it's sound, it's
comprehensive... ..with meaningful goals and initiatives...it's supported by
an assessment process...one with rigor and specificity. My eye...and all
OUR EYES should remain on the execution of this plan...with only sensible
course changes. This plan highly supports the idea that we are all here to
develop leaders of character...to immerse ourselves, you the Corps, in our
own "sea of professionalism"...remaining an intellectual resource for the
Coast Guard, and Department of Homeland Security...the plan endeavors to
remain highly focused on developing and modeling an inclusive community;
continuing to effectively and efficiently strengthen our key partnerships and
developing new ones that matter; and lastly, continuing to strive toward
optimization of our precious resources in this ever-challenging fiscal
environment.

-In particular, I've got my eye on our Commandant's 4 strategic
priority areas...Cyber, Arctic, Western Hemisphere, and Energy. To date,
we have contributed to these priorities in no small measure...as we move
forward, we will build upon these efforts and exhibit an even greater "value-
add" posture within our faculty and corps of cadets.

-I've got my eye on pursuing ways to increase our corps size. For
instance, recognizing the richness of diversity and the importance of

international engagement, we will look to better meet our legislatively authorized level of international cadets here at the Academy.

-Regarding richness of Diversity...we will build on our success in the Inclusion and Diversity arena...it will be a priority...in everything we do...finding, attracting, accessing, retaining, and graduating leaders that better reflect the broad diversity of our Nation.

-I've got my eye on ensuring... we as a team... continue to maintain a "balanced" approach to Character and Leader development...recognizing the "power" of holistic exposure and practice across our established developmental domains... (Intellectual, Physical, Professional, and Values).

-I've got my eye on our waterfront...what I see is so much goodness right now...new L44's...new Marine Science vessel...new construction of a walkway out to Jacobs Rock and our beautiful Sailing center...and new pier construction ...like I said, so much goodness...if we could only find a way to replace the old and deteriorated Pine Hall. Along with a new Strength & Conditioning Center adjacent to Roland...a new "Pine Hall Maritime Center of Excellence" facility is a priority of mine... as it relates to our Needs List.

-Last, but certainly not least...we will continue to be a key... participative, action-oriented... a self-less, and giving member of the Community...our service to this community will continue to be NOTICED... FELT...and APPRECIATED. We will continue to be a responsible and reliable neighbor, here in New London, and throughout the region.

These are but a few of the many opportunities that exist, to keep our Academy locally relevant, nationally prominent, and internationally recognized. As we work together this academic year...I look forward to hearing from all of you on how we might improve as a Service Academy...we SHOULD...and WILL always remain open, postured, and positioned to do things better and positively grow as an institution!

Let me switch gears a bit now... and stress three words that I will be talking a lot about over the next few years...three simple but powerful words that I believe connects us with our CG history...connects us with this place...three words that I believe will support unity of effort...will help guide us... motivate us... and inspire us, as we continue our journey together....three words...**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**. Why you may ask?” Because for the last 225 years, our Coast Guard has demanded “Strength of Character” in service to Nation and around the globe ...and Coastguardsmen...past, and present, have consistently delivered. The Class of 2019 knows well about this...as just last week...each Company gave a “Leader of Character” presentation on one our many CG heroes...Haley, Etheridge, Hooker, Jenkins, Munro, Stone, Newcome and Flores, ...

They laid out each of their particular...demonstrated attributes of Character...Honor, Respect, Devotion to Duty, Intellect, Courage, Commitment, Loyalty, Integrity...and others... clearly these leaders, these heroes displayed “Strength of Character” in carrying out their responsibilities.

In our modern day Coast Guard...today’s complex, challenging maritime environment..., “Strength of Character” continues to be a paramount requirement...a key ingredient to success.

As we recognize the 10 year anniversary of the Coast Guard’s success during and after Hurricane Katrina...we are reminded of the “Strength of Character” of the thousands of Coastguardsmen who responded with care, courage, and commitment...and one Leader of Character...ADM Thad Allen who we heard from on Tuesday Night... who was so very instrumental during this extremely challenging, stressful, pressurized, and tragic time....truly “Strength of Character in Action.”

Today in the field...there is daily “Strength of Character” being exhibited by our operators, as well as our mission supporters...resulting in a spectrum of multi-mission successes.

And this place? The Coast Guard Academy...well, “Strength of Character” is truly alive and well...across our Academy Community...

We'd be here all day if I rattled off the many examples I've heard of this past school year... and over the summer...the many examples I've personally witnessed...since I arrived. I'm sure many of you have also seen actions of our cadets, our faculty, and our staff...that demonstrate personal or collective "Strength of Character." I'll be talking about these throughout the following days, weeks, and months...throughout the year.

Within the Corps...each of you come here with a level of leadership prowess... and Character...it is why our Coast Guard wanted you to begin with. Now that you are here...I hope that you are doing your best to take advantage of the many opportunities to strengthen that character...

I had a wonderful meeting a couple of weeks ago with a few 1/c and 2/c cadets...1/c Sutherland, 1/c Williams, 2/c Flynn, and 2/c Kniss...time well spent on my part...and I offer my thanks to each of them.

We had a terrific discussion...about Character...and about Strength there of...I think 1/c Sutherland said it best when she said "regarding the strength part...when I think of "Strength" I think of exercising...if you exercise consistently...and often...you are sure to get stronger...and that's what this place is all about...exercising...and strengthening our character."

So... my overarching message to all of us this afternoon...let's continue to work... to act, to live, demonstrating Strength of Character...continue, Corps of Cadets, to look for ways to take advantage of... and seize opportunities to exercise your character...to strengthen it...in all 4 domains...

Build resilience and grow as a leader, and maritime professional...be that Leader of Character, you are expected to be: A leader who *embodies the Coast Guard core values... and influences and inspires others to achieve a goal... by seeking to discover the truth... deciding what is right... and demonstrating the courage to act accordingly...ALWAYS.*”

I can feel the excitement, and energy of another academic year, bolstered by a multitude of summer experiences. This week...has offered us some time to acquaint, or reacquaint... to think about our future both... personally and collectively. To better understand our part in this noble mission that transcends all of us as individuals. To reaffirm our commitment to doing our “best”...each and every day. And to reflect on how fortunate we are to be part of the nation’s “greatest maritime organization.”

Now, let me end on a lighter note...and get us going at the start of a fun and spirited school year...let me turn to the “The Power of the Bear” to generate greater energy...and greater enthusiasm...than we have right now. Starting today...until after the Secretary’s Cup Weekend... where we successfully “clean sweep” the Mariners...again....AND WE WILL... I authorize...no I order...that all salutes and greetings here at the Academy shall be accompanied with a “GO BEARS”...and that the response by the receiver of such salute or greeting...will also be “GO BEARS!” CAPT VOGT...Let’s give it a try...(exchange greetings with a GO BEARS!)

CAPT VOGT...I'm setting you up...please remain standing.

By the way...I'm sure many of you... but maybe not all of you, have heard about CAPT VOGT being selected by our Coast Guard for promotion to Rear Admiral? How about joining me in a round of applause for him, and his bride Mary...for this well deserved promotion...Congratulations!

Thanks again everyone...I am honored to be your Superintendent...we have a lot to look forward to...

GO Cadets, GO faculty, GO Staff, and forever...GO Bears!!
