



## Associate Dean of Engineering Leadership Profile

December 2025



*WittKieffer*

## Executive Summary

Massachusetts Maritime Academy, ranked among the best public institutions in the nation for its unrivaled return on investment and effectiveness in promoting social mobility, invites inquiries, nominations, and applications for the position of associate dean of the School of Engineering.

Massachusetts Maritime Academy (the Academy) is a fully accredited, four-year, co-educational state university offering bachelor's and master's degrees that are highly regarded in the worldwide maritime industry and beyond. Located at the mouth of the scenic Cape Cod Canal, the Academy is an hour's drive from the thriving urban communities of Boston and Providence and offers easy access to the pristine beaches of Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard.

One of nine campuses of the Massachusetts state university system, the Academy serves and prepares 1,580 undergraduate and graduate students for careers in the engineering, marine transportation, international maritime business, emergency management, and environmental fields. The Academy has long offered a successful blend of career-focused education informed by strength in both an academic core and the discipline of regimental life. Academy graduates enjoy a competitive advantage in the marketplace: they are highly sought after due to their strong leadership qualities and work ethic.

Reporting to the dean of undergraduate studies, the associate dean will serve as the School's chief administrative officer and play a central role in promoting the institution's engineering programs and enhancing academic excellence. The associate dean will be a member of the provost's senior leadership team and will work closely with the provost, dean of undergraduate studies, assistant dean for academic resources, and other university leaders, faculty, and staff in formulating and implementing the School's academic goals and policies.

The associate dean will work in close partnership with the engineering department chairs in overseeing programs in marine engineering, facilities engineering, and energy systems engineering and their related courses. The associate dean has oversight of all personnel evaluation for the engineering faculty and instructional specialists and supervises the screening and selection process for full-time and part-time faculty and staff. Additionally, the associate dean manages the School of Engineering grant-related budgets, works with industry leaders to develop partnerships that contribute to student opportunity, and responds to engineering academic concerns. The associate dean may also serve as dean of undergraduate studies in the absence of the dean.

Massachusetts Maritime Academy seeks an innovative, strategic, and collegial academic leader who understands the distinctive mission of the Academy and is committed to student success. Requirements include a terminal degree in engineering, educational administration, or a related field; Ph.D. preferred (those with non-engineering terminal degrees must have an engineering master's or bachelor's degree); a minimum of three years of academic leadership experience; excellent oral and written communication skills; and the ability to lead through influence and collaboration.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.

## About the School of Engineering

The School of Engineering at Massachusetts Maritime Academy unites rigorous academics, hands-on training, and tradition-driven leadership development. This School represents a distinctive blend: high-caliber engineering education, structured leadership training, and real-world maritime and industrial immersion, all designed to forge future leaders in the fields of marine, facilities, and energy systems engineering.

The Academy's newly established School of Engineering, formed in early 2023, advances a strategic vision of excellence, splitting into three focused departments: marine engineering, facilities engineering, and energy systems engineering. Each department is led by a department chair who reports to the associate dean of engineering. This organizational refinement enhances communication, empowers program-level advocacy, and sets a clear path for growth in each specialty area.

### Academic Programs & Experience

- **Marine Engineering:** A rigorous academic program combining mechanical, electrical, and systems engineering with approximately 50 days of annual shipboard training. Graduates are prepared for U.S. Coast Guard licensure and roles aboard merchant ships or in shoreside power-generation and shipbuilding sectors.
- **Facilities Engineering:** Trains cadets in the operation and management of large-scale infrastructure, from power plants to manufacturing facilities. The program integrates practical experience including cooperative education and prepares students for Massachusetts Stationary Engineer and Wastewater Operator licensing. Concentrations in Robotics and Nuclear Power are currently in development.
- **Energy Systems Engineering:** This ABET-accredited program focuses on the planning, design, and operation of diverse energy systems, both conventional and renewable. The curriculum includes co-op experiences, promoting real-world skills, professional networking, and post-graduation employment success.

### Leadership Development & Outcomes

Students learn within a military-style Regiment of Cadets, fostering discipline, leadership, and operational accountability from day one. Enhanced by experiential learning - internships, shipboard assignments, and capstone projects – graduates are routinely employed in high-level, career-track positions within 90 days of commencement.

### Experiential Education

Massachusetts Maritime Academy's **Cooperative Education Program** integrates paid, professional work experience directly into select undergraduate majors. Students complete at least one co-op term, typically during winter or summer, working within industry, government, non-profits, or research institutions both locally and abroad, while earning academic credit and financial support. Nearly 30% of undergraduates receive full-time job offers from their co-op or commercial shipping employers upon graduation. Feedback from supervisors highlights students' professionalism, communication skills, and ability to contribute meaningfully upon entry.

Cadets pursuing licensure in Marine Engineering and Marine Transportation at Massachusetts Maritime Academy participate in **Sea Term**, an immersive, 52-day voyage between academic semesters held typically in January and February. During their 4C (freshman), 3C (sophomore), and 1C (senior) years, students alternate through classes, laboratory training, deck and engine watches, ship maintenance, and emergency drills on board. These practical deployments, often aboard commercial U.S. Merchant Marine vessels, allow cadets to accrue a minimum of 180 approved sea days over their collegiate career. Along the way, they visit diverse ports, from Miami and New Orleans to Panama, Spain, and Aruba, while gaining essential hands-on experience in ship operation, voyage planning, and maritime protocols.

## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The associate dean of engineering reports directly to the dean of undergraduate studies. As the leader of the School, which boasts the largest enrollment of students on campus, the associate dean is a key leader in advancing the Academy's academic mission.

The associate dean of engineering will be expected to:

### Provide Strategic Academic Leadership in a Maritime Context

The associate dean serves as the School of Engineering's chief administrative officer, joining the provost's senior leadership team to set and implement academic goals and policies. The successful leader will elevate the academic excellence while honoring the Academy's distinctive blend of rigorous coursework, regimented cadet experience, and hands-on maritime training. The associate dean will ensure workforce ready curriculum by advancing proposals for new concentrations with market analysis, also considering stackable credentials and minors aligned with industry needs.

The Academy is investing significantly in engineering and science facilities, including a \$66 million net-zero-ready [STEM building](#) featuring flexible teaching labs, maker and innovation spaces, and electrified systems, and modernizing campus infrastructure to support the new \$300 million National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) [Patriot State II](#) training ship. The associate dean will work to identify new sources of revenue to ensure the School has appropriate resources for equipment modernization and laboratory maintenance.

### Drive Curricular Innovation

The associate dean will work collaboratively with the department chairs and faculty to drive curricular innovation and responsible growth across marine, facilities, and energy systems engineering, aligning pedagogy, labs, and experiential learning with industry needs and licensure standards.

The Academy's *learn, do, lead* philosophy promotes learning outside the classroom. Experiential learning courses and co-ops allow cadets to gain practical knowledge in their fields in the United States and abroad. The associate dean will work with the faculty to develop experiential learning courses to serve as introductions to hands-on professional training in public service or private organizations.

### Build Cohesion Across the Engineering Departments

An excellent communicator, the associate dean will work to codify roles, shared services, and governance across the School's departments, ensuring the chairs' roles, faculty evaluation cycles, and more are aligned with the Academy's processes, academic policies, and institutional planning. The associate dean will advance shared governance, resource alignment, and cross-department collaboration, ensuring integrated curricula while empowering departments to develop distinctive strengths. The associate dean will bring experience in supporting faculty at all ranks, professional, academic, and industry specialties.

### Recruit, Develop, and Retain Faculty and Staff

The associate dean has oversight of all personnel for engineering faculty and instructional specialists and supervises recruitment of faculty and staff. The Academy values a faculty composition that blends licensed professional mariners and traditional academics. The associate dean will cultivate faculty success, mentorship, and teaching excellence in a predominantly teaching-focused environment that supports student-centric research. The Academy has a strong culture of shared governance, and the associate dean will work to build trust and respect amongst the faculty by ensuring transparency in decision-making that includes open and inclusive communication with students, faculty, and staff.

## Expand Industry Partnerships and Student Opportunity

Working with industry leaders across maritime, energy, and facilities sectors, the associate dean will develop and steward partnerships that enrich co-ops, sea term experiences, and pipelines to licensure and high-ROI careers. Strong alumni engagement and a tight-knit industry amplify career outcomes; the associate dean will leverage these networks to broaden opportunities, including for first-generation students and underrepresented groups.

## Manage, Monitor and Pursue Financial Resources

Working with engineering department chairs and Academy administration, the associate dean oversees and advocates for the School of Engineering and individual engineering department budgets. Additional fiscal responsibility includes management of grant-related proposals and budgets as assigned.



## Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The associate dean of engineering at Massachusetts Maritime Academy is an innovative, strategic, and collegial academic leader who understands the distinctive mission of the Academy and is committed to student success. The Academy seeks an associate dean with the energy and enthusiasm to inspire the faculty to drive curricular innovation, ensuring the highest quality education for its students. The ideal candidate will possess the following professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- **Academic stature:** A terminal degree in engineering, educational administration, or a related field; Ph.D. preferred. Those with non-engineering terminal degrees must have an engineering master's or bachelor's degree.
- **Leadership and vision:** A minimum of three years of academic leadership experience. The ability to lead through influence and collaboration, and engage stakeholders to understand the School, collectively envisioning opportunities for the future.
- **Collaboration and commitment to shared governance:** An inclusive, participative, collaborative leadership style, and the ability to listen and communicate effectively to build consensus across a diverse range of constituencies. A commitment to transparency and partnership with faculty, staff, and students through shared governance. Experience involving faculty, staff, and students in decision-making, the ability to communicate decisions, and a history of generating consensus.
- **Effective advocacy, interpersonal, and relationship-building skills:** Experience building strong relationships internally with faculty, staff, administrators, and students, as well as externally with community organizations, corporate partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.
- **Commitment to student engagement and success:** A record of commitment to enhancing student engagement and success. An ability and willingness to support and promote faculty-student engagement to enhance the student experience.
- **Operational and administrative acumen:** Successful administrative and management experience in a higher education environment. Experience managing personnel; complex budgets; and facilities, IT, and other infrastructure. An ability to empower a team and make informed, principled decisions.
- **Adaptability and agility:** An ability to lead and manage multiple initiatives and projects simultaneously and effectively. The capacity to pivot, change frames and respond nimbly to an ever-changing environment.



## About Massachusetts Maritime Academy

### Overview

Founded in 1891, Massachusetts Maritime Academy is a public institution and one of the nation's oldest and most respected maritime colleges. Located on a 54-acre waterfront campus in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, the Academy combines rigorous academics with hands-on training to prepare students for leadership roles in the global maritime industry, energy sector, and emergency management fields.

The Academy is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education and classified as a Master's College and University (smaller programs) under Carnegie Classification. The Academy offers seven undergraduate majors and three graduate programs, all emphasizing experiential learning and professional readiness. Programs include Marine Engineering, Marine Transportation, International Maritime Business, Emergency Management, Facilities Engineering, Energy Systems Engineering, and Marine Science, Safety, and Environmental Protection. Graduate offerings include master's degrees in Emergency Management, Facilities Management, and Maritime Business Management.

The Academy's distinctive regimental structure fosters discipline, leadership, and teamwork, while its strong industry partnerships provide students with unparalleled opportunities for co-ops, internships, and sea-term experiences aboard training vessels and commercial ships worldwide. The Academy graduates enjoy exceptional career outcomes, with a median salary of \$80,424 six years after graduation. A [recent report from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education](#) shows that the Academy outpaced all other 28 public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth in median earnings post-graduation.

The Academy ranks #11 among Regional Universities North and #3 among Top Public Schools in the 2026 U.S. News & World Report rankings. It is also recognized for excellence in engineering programs (no doctorate), ranking #33 nationally.

The Academy's waterfront campus features state-of-the-art engineering labs, simulators, and training facilities, as well as residence halls and athletic amenities. Students participate in a vibrant campus community with Division III athletics, leadership development programs, and maritime traditions that set the Academy apart from conventional colleges.

## Mission

The mission of the Massachusetts Maritime Academy is to provide a quality education for graduates serving in the merchant marine, the military services, and those who serve the interests of the Commonwealth, Nation and global marketplace. The Academy does so by combining a rigorous academic program with a regimented lifestyle that instills honor, responsibility, discipline, and leadership.

## Institutional Content of Interest

Learn more about the Massachusetts Maritime Academy at the following links:

- [Voyage Plan](#): Senior management's two year action plan for the future of the Academy
- [Current Capital Projects](#)
- [Special Mission Designation](#)
- [The Fleet](#)

## Fast Facts

### Fast Facts

- Founded: 1891
- Location: Buzzards Bay, MA
- Campus Size: 54 acres
- Enrollment: 1,586 students (1,506 undergraduate; 80 graduate)
- Student-to-Faculty Ratio: 13:1
- Gender Ratio: 85% male, 15% female
- Graduation Rate: 79%
- Acceptance Rate: ~95%
- Degrees Offered: Bachelor's and Master's
- Tuition & Fees: \$11,420 in-state; \$23,722 out-of-state (undergraduate)
- Mascot: Buccaneer
- Colors: Blue and Gold

## Academics

Massachusetts Maritime Academy is a top-ranked university with seven undergraduate degree programs focusing on science, engineering, technology, math, and business. The Academy's unique blend of academics and experiential learning allows students to learn theory, put that theory into practice, and graduate with both the knowledge and experience needed for a successful career.

- A 14:1 student to faculty ratio and average class size of 20 allows for personalized and direct access to the Academy's amazing professors.
- State-of-the-art labs and simulators create an immersive teaching experience that replicates real life scenarios within practice environments.
- The Training Ship *Patriot State* departs on a six week, hands-on voyage, which provides shipboard training.
- Internships and co-ops give students the chance to work in their desired field to gain experience and career development.
- Experiential learning courses allow cadets to gain hands-on professional training in public service, or private organizations, in their fields across the United States and abroad.
- The Regiment of Cadets, the military-style structure and lifestyle students participate in on campus, allows students to continue building their leadership and management skills as part of their campus life.



## Leadership

### Commodore Brigid Myers Pavilonis, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs



Commodore Brigid Pavilonis is the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Responsible for the delivery of seven academic majors and the general education of the cadets, she also leads the Academy's efforts in career placement, licensing opportunities and scholastic support services. Commodore Pavilonis has worked in academia for the last 20 years, most recently serving at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Recently retired from the Coast Guard after 28 years, Commodore Pavilonis' operational assignments included tours as the Response Department Head at Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound and as a Deck Watch Officer aboard USCGC RELIANCE in New Castle, New Hampshire.

Commodore Pavilonis is a 1991 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Government. She earned her Masters and Ph.D. in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Her scholarly interests include irregular war, conflict resolution and national security. She is the author of several book chapters and book reviews concerning U.S. operations in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2014, she was presented with the "Spirit of the Bear" leadership, teaching and mentoring award—one of the best honors she has ever received.

She resides in East Greenwich, RI with her husband, Tim, and two children, Kyra and Tim.

### Dr. Jim McKenna, Dean of Undergraduate Studies



Jim McKenna is the Dean of Undergraduate Studies at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Since earning his Ph.D. in Oceanography from the University of Rhode Island, Jim has served in a variety of academic and federal agency positions. Academic appointments include Assistant Professor of Geosciences at Williams College where he taught and served as Associate Director for the Williams College-Mystic Seaport Maritime Studies Program; Professor of Marine Biology and Chair of the Ocean Studies department at Maine Maritime Academy; and Associate Dean for the Bartlett College of Science and Mathematics at Bridgewater State University. Jim's agency work includes serving as a National Park Service Research Learning Center coordinator in Acadia National Park and as Associate Director of Research for the Maine Sea Grant Program.

Jim's interest in the marine world extends into his personal life; he is a passionate sailor and enjoys vacationing with his wife and two children along the coast of Downeast Maine and Cape Cod.



## Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts

Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, offers an exceptional quality of life for those who appreciate coastal living and New England charm. Situated at the gateway to Cape Cod, this scenic village combines breathtaking waterfront views with a relaxed, welcoming community. The area is known for its maritime heritage and outdoor lifestyle. Residents enjoy sailing, kayaking, fishing, and boating along the Cape Cod Canal, as well as easy access to sandy beaches and nature trails. For those who love the outdoors, the region provides year-round opportunities for hiking, biking, and exploring the natural beauty of the South Coast.

Beyond its natural appeal, Buzzards Bay offers convenient amenities and a strong sense of community. Local shops, restaurants, and farmers' markets create a vibrant small-town atmosphere, while nearby towns provide additional cultural and recreational options. Its location makes it easy to enjoy the best of both worlds: Cape Cod's world-class vacation destinations are minutes away, and Boston and Providence are just over an hour's drive for urban excursions. The area boasts excellent schools, safe neighborhoods, and a family-friendly environment, making it an ideal place to settle. With a rich maritime tradition, strong community ties, and access to both coastal and city experiences, Buzzards Bay is not only a great place to work, it's an exceptional place to call home.



## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting Massachusetts Maritime Academy in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by February 23, 2026.

Application materials, nominations, and inquiries can be directed to:

Lauren Bruce-Stets and Bronwen Bares Pelaez, Ph.D.

[Maritime-ADEngineering@wittkieffer.com](mailto:Maritime-ADEngineering@wittkieffer.com)

*The anticipated hiring salary range for the associate dean of engineering is \$150,000 - \$160,000 annually. Those employed by Massachusetts Maritime Academy are Massachusetts State Employees and enjoy a generous benefit package, including access to the Commonwealth's pension system. More information about benefits can be [found here](#).*