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2021 Year in Review: Allen Metcalfe, Jr., Vice President, Operations, Massachusetts Maritime Academy

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Allen Metcalfe, Jr.
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What was the biggest lesson you learned while working during the pandemic? Flexibility. Although the Academy had developed well-thought out plans of action to handle all facets of the pandemic, the ever-evolving aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic required us to be continuously flexible in our action plans and always ready to pivot to a new avenue of operations.

How has your working environment changed over the last year? Having come into the academy right at the onset of the pandemic, the “status quo” was working behind masks, social distancing, limited classrooms, long-distance learning...everything that every other college and university has seen. What has changed is the continuous shifting requirements needed by operations to accommodate the different needs caused by the pandemic. Until this COVID issue is behind us, operations must be vigilant against complacency to keep our personnel safe.

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from? “Observe. Orientate. Decide. Act.” – Colonel John Boyd.

What was your greatest professional accomplishment or most notable project, deal, or transaction in 2021? Completing several major physical renovation projects of existing infrastructure on the campus totaling over \$8M, while beginning two new major construction programs valued at over \$29M; and especially working collaboratively with key Commonwealth and Academy stakeholders to commence study and construction of the new STEM laboratory building. This has been a long-awaited and much-needed addition to the Academy. Working through a Master Plan/Decarbonization study with DCAMM, we are striving to meet the present growth curve of students and providing the best possible flexible and enhanced learning facilities while minimizing any associated carbon-based entities for the foreseeable future.

What are your predictions for your industry in 2022? The pandemic and all of its variants will still be with us, but at a lesser impact than during the opening stages. Institutions will need to be more flexible with their respective personnel, acknowledging the extra time and effort everyone has put in and acting accordingly with reduced loads when able. People in operations and maintenance fields, just like first responders, have to be at the job. They cannot telecommute and they are getting burned out. It will take some time but students will return to the traditional pedagogical formats and probably in a higher curve than pre-pandemic.