

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

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Good afternoon everyone! I greet you on behalf of the MassArt faculty and librarians and extend an especially cordial welcome to David Nelson's friends and family who are joining us today.

When my son Nico was born, a friend wrote by way of congratulation, "You are lucky to be the parent of this child and he is lucky to have you as a parent." That was true in the delivery room; it is true today. But, I have also learned there is more to the story: our mutual good fortune in one another is only as strong as our ability to grow and flourish, independently and together. Luck only holds if when one grows, the other pays attention, keeps up, and continuously shifts in positive response—which leads to more growth, and more necessary change.

So, if you will, permit an imperfect analogy: David Nelson is lucky to be the President of MassArt and MassArt is lucky to have him as a president. MassArt has invited to her side a leader who, as we have heard and witnessed today, views the Presidency as a shared venture; who seeks the counsel and considers the collective wisdom of faculty, staff, students, and alumni; who listens with patience and respect; and who leads with an unlikely combination of coolheaded poise and warm-spirited engagement. In turn, David Nelson has thrown his lot in with a place that has historically affirmed the necessity of public art education, a school that early on made progressive decisions about access and inclusion that still inform the values of the present. In the fortnight of events leading up to today, a definite highlight was the lively talk on MassArt's early history given by art educator Mary Ann Stankiewicz. I learned from her historical account that Massachusetts Normal Art School (as we were once known) faced resistance at its very inception: the proposed funding to establish the institution was cut in half by the reviewing committee. Demonstrating her worth, fighting for her rightful place in the Commonwealth, and claiming her uniqueness as the nation's only publicly funded freestanding college of art and design are all part of MassArt's DNA. Not for nothing is one of our official mottos "MassArt made me fearless!" That's why we are here, 144 years later, gathered in a glorious new building, having just welcomed our largest ever incoming freshman class, and celebrating the investiture of the school's 12th President—still fearlessly confronting the challenges of the present.

This is the institution to which David Nelson has brought his attention, experience, and intelligence. MassArt and David Nelson are lucky in one another, and their mutual good fortune is what we celebrate this day.

But luck is only our beginning point: this day of celebration will come to its conclusion, though we hope not swiftly, and after the last pear tart has been savored out in the courtyard, we will turn to the tasks of the days, weeks, and years ahead. But the good news is that the work is already underway. In response to new leadership, MassArt has begun, ever so slightly, to change. A newfound climate of listening has emerged among and between departments and individuals. I have witnessed a greater willingness within the community to speak the truth about the weeds and thistles keeping MassArt from its full flourishing. People only bring forward problems when they have a reasonable expectation that they and the problems will be taken seriously. Bringing to light issues and challenges is an act of profound trust and hopefulness. So it is not surprising to find listed as a core principle in President Nelson's vision of leadership, the words, "We welcome problems and appreciate suggested solutions."

Since David's arrival to campus, I for one have seen visible forward motion. And while I don't know for sure, I suspect that if asked, David would say MassArt has begun to change him, too.

As we continue to adjust to each other and grow together, we will also pursue our mutual flourishing and ensure our luck will hold. And, Monday morning we will roll up our sleeves and resume our teaching, our artmaking, our writing, our advocacy, our caretaking, our building, our planning, our compassionate engagement with students, with one another, and with our community. We will persevere in our deeply felt work of nourishing and facilitating accessible, affordable, high quality public art and design education for the Commonwealth.

Thank you all for being here on this historic and happy day. It is a great occasion for MassArt, for the City of Boston, and for the Commonwealth. Now, it's time for a party! We welcome you all to the Courtyard for a Community Celebration. Congratulations, President Nelson, Congratulations, MassArt. Stay lucky for each other.