

Convocation Address
September 6, 2023

Thank you all for gathering this afternoon, and welcome. I hope that you are finding your way, exploring your new environment, and staying cool!

It was great fun to meet many of you over the last few days between unpacking vehicles, ringing the Longwood Bell, and at international and transfer student orientations. I hope that your first day of classes has gone well.

Today we are beginning a new tradition for MassArt – Convocation. And, we are also returning to a tradition that is over 100 years old – but I will come back to that in a moment. Convocation means to gather, to convene a new year and where we launch a new class – and we are doing that!

Within this first-year class there are 573 of you – 455 are first-time students, 118 are transfer students, and over 30 of you have family members who attended MassArt.

You are coming from across the commonwealth, the country and around the world and you bring to MassArt abundant talent and creativity, great minds and generous hearts. You bring to MassArt your hopes, your fears, your dreams, and your experiences – and we are so glad you are here.

You vary in age and you represent a range of cultural, gender, and racial identities and differences, diverse family backgrounds and compositions, educational and economic pathways and opportunities, lived experiences and privileges that shape and influence who you are – all of which makes for a richer, more interesting, diverse, and beautiful community.

While there are lots of differences – you also share, in common, a sense of purpose and a passion and desire to develop and deepen your skills of artistry, creativity, making, and designing.

You will be so much better at all of those skills if you also cultivate and elevate your skills of curiosity, critical thinking, empathy, and cultural humility, of intentional listening and engagement, of tenacity and courage, kindness, gentle humor, civility, and a commitment to inclusion, equity, justice.

Together we get to make MassArt a better place. You have already made other parts of your community better, more interesting, more inclusive, and more joyous.

You have started and led affinity and empowerment groups, you have volunteered for community-based organizations, you have painted murals for COVID field hospitals, and you have mentored younger students and emerging artists.

You are scholars recognized by the National Art Honor Society and are Scholastic Arts National Gold Medal winners. You are veterans who have served your country. You are athletes and you have coached athletes in the Jr. Special Olympics. You have had exhibitions, been published in MODEST Magazine, and sold works of art. You work in a wide range of mediums from metal, to woods, to fibers, to glass, to oils and acrylics. You are story makers and story tellers and historians. You have a keen interest in how the world is built and shaped through design, and you have already won awards for costume design and so much more.

You are not afraid to work hard – don't underestimate the importance of that. Combine your skills, passion, and hard work and look out!

I ask that you share what you know with one another, learn from one another, support one another, and take full advantage of this extraordinary faculty and staff who will help and support you along the way.

You belong here. MassArt is your place now and we are all very glad about that!

I promised you I would finish up by sharing with you a tradition that began at MassArt over 100 years ago, one that lasted for many, many years where seniors would make a gift of their well-used smocks to incoming first-year students. In this 150th Anniversary year, as we celebrate our history and look to the future, we are introducing a 2023 version of the smock tradition – we have a T-Shirt selected through a competitive process, designed by Paige Petrosso, a graduate of the class of 2023, and a fashion design major. Please accept this gift with all good wishes for the journey ahead. In no time at all, you will present your version of a smock to a future class.

My thanks to all of you for choosing MassArt, you have chosen well, and so have we. I look forward to what lies ahead and to having you help us lay the groundwork for the next 150 years. Use that time well and with joy.

Thank you!

President Mary K. Grant