

January 10, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

As the rising generation faces climate change and a rapidly evolving economy, we, the undersigned, a diverse group of industry, tribal, government, community, labor, education, and youth leaders, call for a new **maritime and ocean sciences high school** to equip students who are furthest from economic opportunity and social justice for the **climate-adaptive, new-economy jobs** in our region. Over the last year we validated the need for a new project-based high school embedded in our thriving maritime ecosystem through a series of workshops, summits with key participants, advisory meetings, and conversations, and confirmed the desire from students, business and labor leaders, and educators to advance this project. Consider the following:

The maritime industry is a pillar of the state's economy, but the workforce gap threatens the sector.

- The maritime sector continues to grow an average of 6.4% a year, buoyed by the latest technologies, and provides jobs with substantially better pay than the average for all industries. To wit: over 830 maritime businesses in King County provide 19,500 jobs that pay on average \$82,800 per year, compared to Washington State's average annual salary of \$52,000.
- The average age of the state's maritime workforce is 54, the majority of whom are white males owing to structural inequities that have kept women and people of color on the sidelines.
- Water transportation especially faces an impending mass retirement of almost a third of the workforce in the next ten years. The maritime industry projects a job shortage of 150,000 mariners by 2025.

The global response to climate change will be waged on, in and around the ocean.

- Oceans have borne the brunt of the consequences of climate change. Already more than 90% of the excess heat is stored within the world's oceans, where it accumulates and causes increases in ocean temperature (Rhein et al., 2013; Abram et al., 2019).
- Maritime industries will be essential in creating climate solutions, from sustainable fisheries, to efficient and clean movement of goods and people over the water, to the development of offshore renewable energy sources.
- The United Nations reports that while 89% of youth say young people can make a difference on climate change, 84% say they need more information to confront climate change.

Students of color make up more than 70% of students in the residential areas closest to our state's maritime cluster.

- The financial gap between communities of color and white communities has increased during the current economic expansion, with poverty rates increasing in many historically-impacted communities at a time when our region has created more new wealth than any other metropolitan area.
- Students of color represent 79% of students in South Seattle, 78% in the Highline School District and 88% in Tukwila.
- With few career paths into maritime, these communities have not had fair access to family-wage waterfront jobs.

Now is the time to catalyze the energy of our diverse stakeholder group to expand opportunities, close workforce skill gaps, address climate change, promote environmental justice, combat structural racism, and advance the next generation of maritime leaders, scientists, and innovators.

Now is the time to turn the tide, dramatically, and for the better. It is time for a maritime and ocean sciences high school.

Mission

To deliver an extraordinary and relevant education through a community and youth-led maritime and ocean sciences high school. We will empower students, combat structural racism, expand opportunities, close workforce skill gaps, build prosperity in place and fight climate change through environmental justice.

Vision

A world-class education that advances the next generation of leaders, innovators, and marine professionals in a community that faces economic, environmental and social injustices.

Guiding Principles

Equitable Access

Inclusive programs, policies, and practices ensure that maritime career opportunities are accessible to *all*. Focused efforts are made to recruit, prepare, and empower students who are under-represented in maritime and ocean science careers, emphasizing students of color, students with limited access to resources, and girls. In partnership, we work with—not for—the communities we serve.

Quality Education

With pathways into the trades, college and professional degrees, the school provides opportunities to engage in hands-on learning with experts in classrooms, in laboratories, on vessels, and in businesses. Diving deep into real-world practices, students follow their interests to learn a trade, earn industry certifications, and pursue the post-secondary path leading of their choosing, leading to careers on vessels, in management, and across the range of careers in maritime. At the same time, the school collaborates with employers to address skill gaps, employer readiness, and system barriers that constrain young and diverse people.

Sustainability

Humanity faces a great and urgent challenge as we confront the devastating effects of climate change. Students are well-poised to craft solutions with a multidisciplinary lens to address highly interdependent environmental, social and economic elements of our region and the world. Leaders in safeguarding a sustainable future, they are prepared to advance environmental justice and prioritize social cohesion for a more responsible future for generations to come.