



24 September 2025

To whom it may concern:

I am writing as a professor in the Program of Maritime Studies in the History Department at East Carolina University (ECU), USA to recommend the outstanding work of the Maritime Archaeology Society (MAS) in Finland and strongly endorse their applications for funding to continue this valuable contribution to maritime heritage management and research in the future.

Our ECU core Maritime faculty are active, publishing scholars who engage regularly in maritime fieldwork initiatives with students. We are also members of a History Department with two dozen historians who provide additional instruction and guidance. The underwater archaeology faculty teaches a broad range of courses including material culture, excavation, conservation, archaeological principles, and history. In September 2025 MAS partnered with our Program in Maritime Studies' annual 3-week underwater archaeology field school for fourteen MA graduate students, three faculty, and one diving safety officer. Their logistical support, knowledge of the cultural heritage, and ontology dataset, compiling hundreds of shipwrecks, was remarkable. It contributed towards a highly enriching academic experience for both our faculty researchers and students alike. The research vessel *Stella* was one of the most efficient bases for large group scientific work with the benefit of a very competent captain. Generous sharing of their 3D models of hundreds of shipwrecks provided baseline data and a starting point for our students to collect further archaeological and historical information. For example, about changes in shipwreck integrity, site transformation processes, vessel construction, technology history and ship biographies. Our student work could potentially contribute reports and valuable research to their database. We are hopeful that we can continue this partnership and working relationship with MAS in future years either through summer (June) or fall field (September) schools, MA thesis research projects, or faculty research on specific shipwrecks when convenient to MAS scheduling.

The newly formed Maritime Archaeology Institute initiated by MAS recently would further serve our ECU academic needs for facilitating collaboration not only with these outstanding MAS citizen scientists, but also with maritime archaeologists in the Finnish Heritage Agency and the University of Helsinki. Our Program in Maritime Studies Program will have the opportunity to utilize its full member international status as a UNESCO UNITWIN member <https://unitwinunderwaterarchaeology.net/> that brings together University programs, research centers, societies, and museums dedicated to increasing capacity and enhancing the protection of underwater cultural heritage. Finland offers field opportunities beyond the "typical" domestic site in North Carolina (i.e. cold water, open sea, iron age to present). Foreign experience makes our graduates more competitive for employment on the world stage (and training in foreign collaboration). Furthermore, building a long-term collaboration is useful to ECU because field schools are a recurring element of our program.

Sincerely,

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Program in Maritime Studies

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