Thank you to all the USAS members who supported me in my effort to become President of USAS. In my shadow year as USAS President-Elect, I realized the time and dedication the board members have committed to carrying out the work of the USAS Chapter. Dave Straus did a great job as President in keeping all Board Members on task and streamlining the Policy and Procedures to make future transitions seamless. He has left big shoes to fill and I thank him for all his hard work and guidance.

USAS 2019-2020 has an awesome line-up of Board Members, such as our incoming President-Elect, Matt Parker; Secretary/Treasurer, Kwamena Quagrainie and our incoming Board Members, Lauren Jescovitch and Matt DiMaggio. Their first task was to populate their committees with some of the best talents within academia and the industry to further the workshops, webinars and educational goals of the chapter. They have all done a great job.

When given the gavel, I was asked what my goals are for the next year. My number one goal is to maintain the good work that all the members of committees have been working on, grow the membership, which reached 1252 for the New Orleans meeting (up from 896 in 2018), increase student membership and awards to include more of the social sciences pertaining to aquaculture, communities and gender. We will continue to support the growth and development of the university sub-units, of which we have four active and two in development.

Working with the Past Presidents, we are working on different ideas about continuing to work on a possible “coffee table book” or a media campaign about aquaculture activities in each State of the U.S. The goal is to change the perception of aquaculture by highlighting each state’s aquaculture industry with vibrant pictures and statistics of the economic value and production and look to supporting other media marketing venues to educate consumers, representatives and legislators of the benefits of supporting and moving aquaculture forward. Discussions continue and we hope to complete this project next year in time for Aquaculture America 2020 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

We continue to work closely with the National Aquaculture Association (NAA) as legislation is introduced that will directly affect the industry, to get the word out to members and to encourage comments and input. In addition, we continue to organize an Initiative on Public Education to informed lawmakers and policy makers with science-based aquaculture information for them to make educated decisions. There have been great discussions and interest in some sort of one-stop web-site or fact sheet with to address the misinformation that is out there so we can direct the inquiries like “I don’t eat farmed fish because it is full of antibiotics and bad for you” to a science based rebuttal to those many un-informed consumers. There is so much great research and factual, science based information available; we just have to figure out how to get it directly to the end consumer. I believe this is happening through membership growth, academic programs and social media. However, an organization is only as strong as its members are and its members are empowered by their input and participation. I encourage members to become involved, volunteer on committees, send thoughts and comments and VOTE!

It is vital that we continue working together to change the negative perception aquaculture has had to battle against in order to move forward. We must develop further by having good educational information for the industry, consumers, bankers, doctors, educators and present the growing opportunities within the aquaculture industry and future.
Again, I thank you and I look forward to an exciting year of hard work, working alongside you to meet and exceed the goals of the USAS Chapter of the World Aquaculture Society to promote U.S. aquaculture through increased educational efforts.