

To Every Tolani Mariner

We all remember the same things.

The gates at Induri closing behind us that first week. Watches that ran long past midnight. The first time the pilot stepped off and the open sea was all there was. And then the quiet day each of us signed off for the last time, and found the brotherhood we had built scattered across forty countries and a hundred companies — reachable, if at all, through a number that no longer worked.

The bond never ended. We simply stopped having a place to keep it.

Let me put it plainly. We are one of the strongest maritime communities any institute has produced — engineers, masters, superintendents, surveyors, managers, founders, across the whole value chain. Yet when one of us needs a berth, a route ashore, a word of advice, or a hand in a crisis, we fall back on luck and on whoever happens to be in the right group that day. We help each other, but late, and improvised.

Other institutions solved this long ago. Their alumni built networks that open real doors and return value to members year after year. They were not born with a stronger bond than ours. They built the structure to carry it. We never have.

And we have felt it, in flashes — a chance meeting in a far port, a batch group that lights up the moment someone needs help, a reunion that reminds us what this community feels like when it comes together. Those are flashes. Imagine it carried right through the year.

It is time we did — and we have worked out how.



We are calling it

Cynosure

the guiding star — the fixed point a ship steers by, the one all eyes turn to

Cynosure is an independent maritime alumni network, based in Dubai, built on one principle: membership has to pay the member back. It is free to join, professionally run, and transparent. The more you take part, the more it returns. What follows is the shape of it — enough to know whether you are in.

◆ What is on offer

- **Verified opportunities** — a members-only board of berths at sea and roles ashore, every posting vouched by a shipmate. Not a faceless portal — a recommendation from inside the family, where a name still carries weight.
- **The move ashore, handled** — the hardest jump of a sailor's career, made with company. Mentors who have already become superintendents, surveyors, DPAs, technical and fleet managers and brokers, and a path mapped from sea time to a shore role.
- **Introductions that count** — a verified directory across the whole value chain — owners, managers, class, P&I, suppliers, recruiters — where every introduction is one of us to another.

- **Group benefits** — insurance and services priced by the strength of all of us together — life and disability cover, family health, professional indemnity — tuned to what seafarers and their families actually need, and typically well below individual rates.
- **A safety net already in place** — a standing, governed relief fund for members, families and cadets in genuine need, with group cover beside it. Protection that exists before the crisis — never again a hurried collection after the worst has already happened.

◆ **The programmes that keep it alive**

- **Mentoring along the career arc** — cadet to officer, officer to shore, shore to leadership, with outcomes tracked.
- **Career communities** — by route and by discipline: engine, deck, ETO, and by destination hub.
- **Cadet scholarships and support** — so no cadet is ever held back for fees.
- **Recognition** — a Distinguished Maritime Alumnus award and a young-achievers list, celebrating the best of us across sea and shore.
- **A Women in Maritime council** — building a leadership pipeline in a field that badly needs one.
- **Batch ambassadors** — conveners who reconnect their own years and bring them aboard.
- **An annual Maritime Alumni Summit** — anchored in Dubai and rotating through the hubs, with talks, recognition and reunion.
- **A digital magazine** — carrying our own stories, our wins, and our transitions.

◆ **Capital for our own**

For the builders among us, an Entrepreneurs' Circle — peer community, mentorship and introductions for member-founders. Alongside it, and deliberately kept separate, a regulated investment fund: structured in Dubai's JAFZA under the regulator's professional-investor regime, so alumni investors can back maritime and alumni ventures. The network introduces and prepares; the fund, run at arm's length by a licensed manager, decides and invests. None of the members' charitable money ever touches it — and a share of the fund's profits can be pledged back to the relief fund and cadet scholarships.

◆ **How you belong — and how you rise**

Belonging is tiered, and the base tier is free:

- **Crew (free)** — the verified directory, community hubs, public events, the job board, the magazine and newsletter.
- **Member** — everything in Crew, plus the benefit programmes, member events, mentorship matching, relief-fund eligibility and priority opportunity alerts.
- **Officer / Patron** — for senior members who want to lead and give back — a leadership track, curated introductions and priority programming.
- **Corporate** — for shipping companies and maritime employers — recruiting access and brand presence, on equal, conflict-managed terms.

Cadets and recent graduates join free, or close to it, for their first years. Anyone who passed through Tolani belongs — distance-learning graduates included.

And belonging is something you can climb.

Cynosure runs on a volunteer leadership ladder — the engine borrowed from the world's strongest alumni networks — where members rise on merit:

Team Leader → Manager → Director → Vice-President → Executive → Board

This is what makes the whole thing work. It turns leadership development into a member benefit — real responsibility, a real title, real growth — and it staffs the network from within, so Cynosure never lives or dies on a handful of volunteers burning out. You do not just join Cynosure. You can run a team, a hub or a programme, and grow as a leader through the network, not only within your company. The work is organised into teams anyone can join and lead — People & Leadership, Membership & Welfare, Opportunities & Partnerships, Recognition & Scholarships, and Communications.

◆ How it is run

Trust is the product, so the governance is built to be seen:

- **A Board of Trustees** — fiduciary oversight and strategy: the founders, independent trustees with no financial stake, and trustees elected by the membership, all on fixed terms with term limits.
- **A Board of Advisors** — senior maritime leaders — owners, managers, class, P&I, finance — who lend credibility and open doors, without the fiduciary load.
- **An Executive Team** — functional leads running it day to day on the proven CXO model, kept lean at the start.
- **A General Counsel and Treasurer** — keeping the legal and financial lines clean, including the relief fund.

Above all: open books, audited accounts published every year, a conflict-of-interest policy with disclosure and recusal, and a whistleblower channel. Money you can trace.

◆ How it pays for itself

Cynosure is built to stand without the founders' wallets. A seed gets it off the ground — from a corporate or family-office backer, at arm's length and documented in the open. From there it runs on freemium dues and non-dues revenue: benefit-partner commissions, employer and recruiting partnerships, events and sponsorship. The aim is a network whose recurring revenue covers its own running cost, with reserves and a relief-fund endowment built behind it, so the safety net survives any lean year. It is free to belong, and built to last.

◆ How we get there

In four phases, over roughly three years:

- **Foundations (0–3 months)** — the legal base, the brand, the governance, and the first cooperation conversation with the institute.
- **Pilot (3–9 months)** — a charter crew of fifty to a hundred and fifty well-placed alumni; the opportunities board live; first partners signed; the relief fund standing; the first Dubai summit.
- **Scale (9–18 months)** — hubs activated, paid tiers and programmes rolled out, break-even in sight, the fund's licensing begun.
- **Institutionalise (18–36 months)** — an elected board seated, audited accounts published, reserves and endowment built, the fund deployed.

◆ Built for a life at sea

Most of us are sailing — on a phone, on a ship's connection, off watch at odd hours. Cynosure is built for that life, not against it:

- **Mobile-first and low-bandwidth** — usable from a phone on a ship's connection, not just a desk ashore.

- **Asynchronous** — opportunities, mentoring and introductions that work when you are free, not only when everyone happens to be online at once.
- **Contract-cycle aware** — it reaches you again at sign-off, when it matters most, instead of assuming you are always there.

◆ **Where it lives, and how it sits with the institute**

Cynosure is based in Dubai — a global shipping hub and the natural home for our diaspora — with chapters following the fleet. It is independent and complementary: it honours Tolani Maritime Institute and everyone already working to keep us connected, it never claims to be official, and it carries the institute's name only as a description of who it serves. This is our own body, built to stand beside what exists, not against it.

Here is what matters: it becomes real only if enough of us decide it should.

Move now, while our community is at its peak of seniority and reach, and we leave something the next batch inherits — a legacy, not a group chat. Wait, and nothing dramatic happens, which is exactly the danger. Another batch graduates into the isolation we knew. Another berth goes to a stranger. Another family meets a crisis with a collection instead of a standing hand. A moment like this does not announce itself when it closes.

We are not asking for your money. We are asking for your belief.

And this is not an idea thrown into a group at midnight. It is a plan that has been worked through — the entity, the programmes, the funding, the safety net, the governance, the timeline. What it needs now is not more planning. It needs enough of us to want it.

This letter is the shape of it. The full plan holds the rest — the detailed structure and legal form, the numbers and the funding model, the fund's mechanics, the full roadmap.

So here is all we ask of you now: read this, and if it rings true, say so. Ask to see the full plan. Tell us the shipmates who must be aboard from the first day. Raise your hand — and if enough of us do, we begin.

The gangway is down. Come aboard.

— Yasovardhan Chinni (YC) & Ravi Kiran (RK)

We have put this framework on paper and are ready to take the first watch — but it was never meant to be ours alone.