

June 16, 2022

Colleagues:

I hope this note finds you well and that you have been able to enjoy some of the recent beautiful weather we are experiencing. I write with some updates and information to keep you apprised of developments since my last communication. Over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to participate in a number of activities, each of which reinforced in my mind the special place that is the College of Staten Island. On Wednesday, June 8, I attended the University's reception for its valedictorians and salutatorians, where I was pleased to share the evening with Professor John Verzani (newly elected Chair of the University Faculty Senate!) and our own honoree, Valedictorian Maxwell Velikodny. (Salutatorian Cheyenne Watson was also feted but unfortunately unable to join us that evening). It was wonderful to connect with old colleagues and to make new friends as well: the evening demonstrated again the power of CUNY's diversity and its impact on individual and collective lives.

I also had the opportunity to review both the preliminary budget allocation (it will be voted on at the next Board meeting) and it appears that CSI is likely to see slight increases to its operating budget. The financial picture is far from complete, but a few things stand out: most notably, but for our dramatic enrollment decline, the allocation would have been substantially better, so it is incumbent on us to attract, recruit, and retain a greater percentage of prospective and real students than ever before. At heart, our budget is student-dependent and enrollment-driven, so we must redouble our efforts on a strategic enrollment management plan, including outreach to non-traditional and adult learners. I have asked AVP Alex Scott to lead this effort, but it should be noted that enrollment is a "shared concern" and it truly takes the effort of each and every member of our campus community to make this happen.

I also reviewed the University's Performance Management Plan data as it relates to key metrics compiled by the Central Office: although we have seen declines in several important areas, almost all of these can be attributed to the headwinds of the pandemic, and I am confident that our campus will develop plans to help us navigate the complex path ahead. We cannot attribute all of our issues to the pandemic alone: in the coming academic year, we will be focusing attention on gateway course completion, addressing widening equity gaps, enhancing faculty scholarship, and building a campus climate that is supportive of all members of our community. These are not easy lifts, but they are important and imperative.

I also had the pleasure of meeting with counterparts from several CUNY institutions to discuss common issues and concerns, and I met with longtime friend of CSI, Assemblyman Mike Cusick, to solicit his ongoing support for campus improvements and programming. CSI is unique, and fortunate, to have friends from both sides of the political aisle: as the only public institution of higher education on the island, it is easy for them to get behind our efforts and we are not in competition with other entities for their support. This bodes well for the campus and my staff and I are working hard to leverage these relationships for our benefit. Perhaps more importantly, I had a meeting with an even more "locally elected representative," Student

Government President Michael Ivany, who shared with me his vision for a campus that is more responsive to student needs (accessibility, student-centric) and his sustained commitment to work with the administration to make this vision a reality. The students have fierce advocates in their representatives, and I hope, in all of us who serve them.

This week, I had the honor of attending the annual Board meeting of the CSI Alumni Association. This group of dedicated (and proud) graduates gives generously of its time, talents, and treasure to support the current generation of Dolphin students. It was exciting to hear of the opportunities that they have identified to assist our students and their own members, and of the plans that they have to grow their organization so as to maximize their impact. The Alumni Association is a key partner in what we are trying to accomplish, and its Board is a tremendous tool that we ought to use to realize our full potential. Later that week, I had a similar meeting with the Board of the CSI Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) entity whose work is well-known to many on the campus and throughout the Island. Like the Alumni Association, the Foundation is deeply committed to the welfare of the campus and, especially, of the students whom we are privileged to serve. Their annual “Celestial Ball” gala is one of the highlights of our philanthropic and fundraising year, and it will return to an in-person format in early December. It is sure to be a wonderful celebration!

I look forward to continued collaboration with both bodies, and with all of you, as we look to a future that is equity-driven and student-centered.

Until next time, and wishing those among us a Happy Father’s Day,



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