

September 9, 2022

Colleagues:

This week was marked by a somber opening and ended on a similar note. Labor Day weekend brought not just the unofficial end of summer, but word of the tragic death of CSI first-year student Shantasia O'Brian. A Dolphin Cove resident, Shantasia was killed one day prior to her 18th birthday, the victim of gun violence that resulted in her senseless and untimely death. The campus remains in a state of shock but is committed to helping each other through this time of grief and anger. The family has expressed appreciation for the outpouring of support and sympathy that they have received, and I am proud to serve as the representative of such a caring community.

The workweek was short, but intense and productive. In addition to the usual welcome activities that mark a return to campus (and kudos to the Division of Student Affairs for their spirited "Weeks of Welcome" events), I was engaged in conversations with the NCAA (to discuss return to play, conference dynamics, and campus access), governance leaders (where we discussed priorities for the coming year—more on that in a minute—and our current and projected budget scenarios), the Office of Recruitment and Admissions (where we discussed plans for increasing enrollment), and the Center for Global Engagement (where we discussed ideas related to international students). These conversations revealed to me what we should prioritize in the coming months, as we emerge from COVID protocols and embark on a search for the next permanent President of this institution.

As I have said repeatedly, this year needs to be all about strategic enrollment management: how can we apply a proverbial tourniquet to stop the hemorrhaging of students from our campus? This is not the job of one office or unit: it is everybody's responsibility and each of us must be the "best ambassador of CSI that we can be." We need to demonstrate the relevancy of our programs and demonstrate that CSI is not just inexpensive but represents "value added."

As I mentioned in last week's message, I think that improving campus culture and climate should be a top institutional priority, so that all members of our community will feel valued and respected. I was heartened to see our proposal for such an activity—"The RELAY Project: A Structure for Reparative Healing"-- was selected by CUNY as part of its inaugural BRESI funding. This bodes well for the future and reflects the importance of such work on behalf of the campus anti-racism collective. (Other CSI faculty were also awarded a pair of individual grants related to curricular decolonization, important work that assures our students "see themselves" in our curriculum).

Lastly, as our Strategic Plan "Opportunity to Ascend" has come to a close, it is imperative that we begin the process to implement a new plan. It would be presumptive of me, as Interim President, to kick off a formal strategic planning process, as this might commit the permanent President to a course of action that s/he might not appreciate, but there are certain steps (such as the formulation of committees, task forces, and working groups) that we can certainly take in preparation for the hard, important work ahead and –working with governance leaders—it is my intention to do so this year.

The week ended, of course, with our annual commemoration of September 11. Friday morning saw a touching memorial tribute that included the reading of the 27 names of CSI alumni who were lost to us on that fateful day. Although more than two decades have passed since the tragic events of 9-11-2001, the memory of that catastrophe is still fresh in the minds of many, but so too are the stories of heroism, of communities coming together, and of healing and repair. May the lessons learned from that horrific event allow us to deal with more immediate tragedies, such as that which we faced upon hearing of the death of Shantasia O'Brian.

Until next time,



Timothy G. Lynch, Ph.D. (he/him/his)
Interim President, College of Staten Island
The City University of New York
2800 Victory Blvd, SI, NY 10314
718.982.2400