

February 18, 2022

Colleagues:

I hope that you've been well since my last communication. I write now to provide an update as to campus activities over the past two weeks—I did not want to send my usual Friday email during the Lincoln's Birthday/Superbowl/Valentine's Day holiday trifecta. So, you're in for a real treat with this installment...

I am pleased to share that the final version of our Middle States report has been submitted to our accreditors. Many thanks to those who spearheaded this initiative and for all the hard work that went into generating the data that supports our narrative. The College of Staten Island has many good things to celebrate, and this report goes a long way toward moving us from "the best kept secret in higher education" to sharing a story that acknowledges our people and our programs. There are certainly challenges ahead, and the MSCHE team will use our report to inform its assessment of how we can and should improve our operations during its upcoming site visit, which will occur (virtually) on March 27-30. Campus preparations are in full swing for that important event. A Town Hall is scheduled for Tuesday, March 1, where select administrators and other colleagues will be available to answer questions, provide insight, and otherwise support us in our reaccreditation efforts.

This week, I had a series of conversations with local and state elected officials, and am hopeful that we can continue to work with them to move a number of important projects ahead. Members of the Cabinet and I have been engaged with the Central Office on a lobbying strategy, and the general tenor of our conversations—and the overall budget situation—have been guardedly optimistic. One benefit already realized was the allocation of more than a dozen lecturer lines to CSI: these will be utilized to increase the percentage of instruction delivered by full-time members of our teaching faculty, advance diversity, and to close equity gaps. The department chairs, deans, and Office of Academic Affairs have been working collaboratively to recommend the best use of these important resources.

Other projects requiring legislative support were made obvious during campus tours with members of our Facilities, Information Technology, and other teams: it was great to get out of my office and interact with folks in their work environments, to see with my own eyes the challenges they encounter, and (perhaps most importantly) to thank them for their contributions to CSI. Last week, I hosted representatives from Staten Island University Hospital, I will soon visit CSI-St. George, and I have meetings with both the CSI Foundation and private philanthropists on my schedule: the hope is that my listening and learning tour will allow me to better advocate for the campus and those we serve.


I also met with representatives from the East Coast Conference and from the NCAA as we complete our probationary period and prepare for our elevation to full Division II status. Three years in the making, this move has already helped with recruitment, retention, and enrollment, while enhancing our campus culture and climate. I am pleased with the work of our colleagues in the Athletics Program who have contributed so much to student success, on the courts, fields, and beyond. I am convinced that the same hard work they have put into

this endeavor will be matched by their commitment moving forward, and that the “D2 Dolphins” will be a source of pride for years to come.

While these meetings were important and enjoyable, the real highlight of my calendar was interacting with our students, at both the Winter Involvement Fair and the WinterFest, held this week. It is inspiring to see so many students back on campus, enjoying all that CSI has to offer: as we plan for a return to normalcy and a greater on-campus presence, it is important to remember the social as well as the academic benefit of being at CSI. As the weather warms and the calendar turns to spring, I look forward to more such events—including an on-campus Commencement ceremony, in-person Dolphin Awards, and a fall Convocation of the College—and eagerly anticipate meeting with student leaders in the coming weeks. Amid the diversion of the student activities, there was another important event, the second in our series of year-long commemorations marking the “Year of Willowbrook”: it is important to remember our past and honor the legacy of those who worked to ensure that all persons have the right to live to their full potential, and with dignity.

I also had the opportunity to meet with department chairpersons, the Council of Deans, and faculty leaders from various programs and units. I found these conversations to be honest and refreshing, even when we were discussing issues that were contentious or controversial. And of course, this week brought my first College Council meeting, one that mirrored my earlier cordial (if candid!) interactions with both the College Council Executive Committee and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. These meetings confirmed my belief that shared governance is alive and well at CSI, and I am hopeful and optimistic that this framework will serve me and the College into the future. While much remains to be done, it is evident that there are many who are willing to do the hard, important work ahead.

With gratitude for those who are so willing, and with best wishes for a long and restorative holiday weekend,
TGL



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