



February 16, 2024

I hope this mid-month message finds you well as I write with updates and information about recent activities that you may find of interest.

Although this was a short work week it was a busy one, marked by the first snowstorm in some time---and thank you to our hard-working Buildings and Grounds team for clearing the campus of the accumulation to make for a safe and slip-free workplace! For a brief time Willowbrook was transformed into a temporary Winter Wonderland, as seen in our recent social media posts (and be sure to follow us on these platforms: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)). The snow did not stop our students from participating in the annual Winter Student Engagement Fest, and I thank the team in Student Life for making such a memorable event happen for those who participated.

On Tuesday, I attended a training session offered by the New York City Commission on Human Rights regarding “Understanding Muslim Experiences and Combating Anti-Muslim Bias.” This was particularly timely as that evening’s CUNY Board of Trustees passed a resolution announcing a slate of new school holidays, to be implemented in the coming academic year. Effective Spring 2025, Diwali, the Lunar New Year, and Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha will be added to the academic calendar, making CUNY one of the first university systems in the country to do so and affirming our institutional community to celebrate diversity and centering inclusion.

The following day, I attended my monthly Council of Presidents meeting where we discussed, among other things, progress on CUNYBUY, challenges related to delays in processes concerning Federal Financial Aid, research activities, ideas about revenue-generation (and we are exploring action on many fronts here), and ways to better serve our students (including ways to smooth “potholes in the transfer pathway.”) As always, it was as good to hear about

best practices as it was to share the many good things that we are all engaged with here at the College of Staten Island. We also discussed ongoing campus climate initiatives, and that evening I participated in the quarterly meeting of the Finance and Investment Committee of the CSI Foundation. We reviewed our recent and historical financial statements, discussed the upcoming “Spring into Giving” gala (April 18) and discussed most effective methods relating to foundations. We are fortunate to have such dedicated professionals on our Board and its various committees.

On Thursday, I hosted Dean Dara Byrne and Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Roblin Meeks from the Macaulay Honors College to discuss ways in which we can be mutually supportive and how to elevate the achievements of students in all our Honors Programs (Verrazzano and Teacher Education Honors Academy included). We brainstormed about living-learning communities, immersive educational experiences, and other topics. MHC and its partner campuses are one way that we can leverage the power of the University system for the betterment of all our students. That day also brought the first College Council and Faculty Senate meetings of the Spring term. As always, we had frank—but cordial and collegial conversations—about enrollment, budget, plans for Commencement, and related topics. I look forward to working with you all on these important matters. The busy day ended with the opening of a new exhibit by Professor Miguel Aragón, *Holding it All Gently* in 1P, which I encourage you all to check out.

My week closed with a series of meetings regarding Athletics, including one with our East Coast Conference (where both our men’s and women’s basketball teams have qualified for the postseason). I also wanted to congratulate Coach Ackalitis for the Swimming and Diving teams having been named recipients of the Scholar All-American Award for their cumulative GPA, as announced last week, and recognize all of you for helping provide meaningful experiences for our students. It is a message that VP Hodge and I will convey to our elected officials this weekend as we meet with them—and advocate for us—in Albany.

Enjoy the lengthy President’s Day holiday weekend.

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Timothy S. Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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