



February 23, 2024

Colleagues:

I hope that you are well as I write with updates and information concerning recent activities that you may find of interest.

Although this was a short workweek, it was a busy one. Over the weekend, I traveled to Albany to advocate for increased funding for CUNY and CSI. In addition to meeting with state legislators from the Black, Hispanic, Puerto Rican, and Asian caucus, I had the opportunity to dine with trustees, colleagues, and students from across the University to discuss strategies and why it makes sense to invest in public higher education. A recent commissioned study shows that for every \$1 we invest in CUNY, we reap a return of \$9. This is a message that we need to amplify, and I ask that you take every opportunity to lobby (y)our elected officials for increased funding for higher ed. CUNY will be launching a letter-writing campaign for alumni, employees, and others to get this urgent call in front of those who can make a difference, and I hope you will consider supporting this initiative. In the coming weeks, I will be meeting with several state and local elected officials and I hope that the support they have shown us in recent years is matched in the coming one.

On Tuesday, following the long Presidents' Day holiday weekend, I attended a symposium on campus in honor of Black History Month. Organized by Professor El Idrissi of our Biology Department, the panel included scholars from across the globe who came to CSI to discuss the history and impact of Estevanico, a Black Muslim enslaved person who has been largely missing from historical accounts that document early American exploration. I learned much from the conference and was pleased to hear from a variety of high-profile attendees (including diplomats from Morocco, Senegal, Indonesia, The Netherlands, and Qatar) all of whom were grateful for the opportunity to tell the story of this explorer on our campus. The event featured a dozen speakers—including taped remarks from the U.S. consulate in Casablanca, a number of artists, and even a musician who played songs—on period-accurate

instruments—from the time of the explorer’s life. It was an incredible and profound program that caused me to rethink what I thought I knew about this time. I want to thank Professor El Idrissi for organizing the conference, and for inviting me to make brief introductory comments: it was clear from this and similar events, that CSI truly is a destination campus and a center of academic and intellectual life for the Island. Further proof of this, and of our institutional commitment to centering equity and inclusivity, can be seen in next Tuesday’s “Excellence in Black Business” event, sponsored by New York City Councilmember Kamillah Hanks, and hosted in our Center for the Arts.

The week also saw the annual Study Abroad Fair, organized by our Center for Global Engagement (CGE). By providing opportunities for students to travel and learn more about our world, CGE plays an important part in our educational mission, and they practice what they preach. Recently, CGE staffer Winnie Brophy was selected as a Fulbright recipient, and she will spend some time in Taiwan. This is a testament to her advocacy for international education and her work as an administrator, and I am sure you join me in offering warm and heartfelt congratulations on her recognition! Others deserving of our recognition include our Men’s and Women’s Basketball teams, whose seniors will be celebrated at next Wednesday’s games. I hope you can join me in sending them off with a rousing “Blackout Night” at the Dolphin Tank!

As the month of February draws to a close (!) and as we just weathered a nationwide cellular outage, I ask that you remember your important role in cybersecurity. As part of security compliance, Information Technology Services would like to remind everyone to participate in the “Cybersecurity Awareness Training” available on Blackboard. It is important to take this refresher on an annual basis to stay apprised of security strategies. You will find this training under “my organizations.” I thank you for your attention and assistance in this important matter.

Until next time,



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