

January 27, 2023

Colleagues:

Welcome to the Spring 2023 term! I am always excited by the start of the semester and the return of students, and I know that many of you share this sentiment. College campuses are places best experienced in person, and although we proved during the pandemic that we are resilient and adaptive, it is clear that we are also social creatures, who benefit most from interacting with others in ways other than via screenshots. Wednesday's student engagement fair and the ongoing "Weeks of Welcome" show how much our community serves each other and how vital an on-campus presence is.

Since I last wrote, I have remained busy with outreach to various partners and constituents. A group of CUNY Presidents and I attended a luncheon hosted by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute to learn more about their activities, and I subsequently participated in a Lunar New Year banquet where we discussed issues of importance to the Asian and Asian American communities (Happy Year of the Rabbit, by the way!). I also attended Borough President Vito Fossella's "State of Staten Island" Address, where it was made clear that CSI has a role to play on the road to recovery from COVID-19. Through partnerships with local employers and civic organizations, we can provide the skills, knowledge, and abilities to serve as the economic and intellectual heart of the Island: our NCLEX (nursing exam) pass rates are the equal of NYU and far greater than Wagner College (at a fraction of the cost), and our placement rates for professional schools (medical, dental, veterinary, optometry, and law) are, proportionally speaking, better than those of any other campus in the CUNY system. This fact has led to innovative partnerships, such as a nascent one with St. George's University Medical School, which allows for *guaranteed acceptance* (at a significant discount, and with local residency placements) for qualified CSI graduates. As I heard someone state this week, CSI is an institution where "if you stay here, you can go anywhere."

Over the past year, I have learned much about CSI and the people who make it so special. This month, I witnessed it firsthand as representatives from CAAS and other advising units, the Registrar's Office, and the various academic schools, divisions, and departments came together in ways that allowed us to maximize our enrollment: where we had projected a nearly 10% reduction from last Spring, we are currently at a **net gain** in terms of both headcount and FTE! This would not have been possible but for coordinated activity, clear communication, and consistent messaging around issues of scheduling, staffing, and student engagement. I know that this was not an easy lift, and I want to commend all those who had a role to play in making this dramatic turnaround possible. It truly takes a village to make this happen, and I appreciate the collective and individual efforts that went into making this happen. Well done, all!

Such intense activity often comes with a physical and psychological toll. I have heard from many employees over the last year that they have been asked to "do more with less" or that they are burned-out from the rigors of remote work. This is a common refrain around higher education these days, but that does not lessen the impact or the burden of those who are experiencing this on our campus. As we look at staffing needs in the future, we will be prioritizing those offices

that have the most interface with current and prospective students, so that our “customer service” is not negatively impacted. This semester, I would also like to plan a series of employee recognition/team-building events, and find time to offer professional development/training sessions around self-care so that we can appreciate one another while taking care of ourselves. As the saying goes, “you can’t pour from an empty cup...”

Until next time, and with gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Timothy G. Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Timothy" being the most prominent part.

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