

February 10, 2023

Colleagues:

I hope that this note finds you well. Our thoughts go out to those affected by this week's devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria, and we have communicated with our students from those regions apprising them of resources and support. Others who need assistance in dealing with the aftermath of that tragedy can utilize our [Employee Assistance Plan](#) which offers confidential counseling support 24 hours a day. While Student Affairs has preemptively reached out to students from the affected areas, please also let people know that students may be referred to our [Counseling Center](#) for support.

Today, I write with important updates and information concerning the College and University budget situation.

As you are no doubt aware, CSI (and all other CUNY institutions) was required in mid-December to revise its current (Fiscal Year 2023) financial plan to realize a 2% savings. As we were mid-cycle, this effectively meant a cut that was, in effect, twice as steep. Through consultation with our College Council Budget Subcommittee and others, we were able to fashion a plan that was accepted by the University, and which realized substantial savings in a very short time. I could not have been more pleased by both the process, rooted in a respect for shared governance and based on total transparency with insight into the budget process, and by the outcome. Through a concentrated focus on maintaining enrollment—primarily through increased retention—and by right-sizing our academic offerings, we were able to claw back \$1.8M. Consequently, our structural deficit—though still large—is moving in the right direction (as an aside we were one of but four CUNY institutions to see a reduction in our structural deficit this year, and we had the largest reduction). I want to extend my sincere appreciation to all those who worked to make this happen.

Late last week, campuses received the unwelcome news that additional cuts were required for FY 2024, and the campuses were given individual savings targets. Ours is a hefty 7%, or in excess of \$6 million. We have already held meetings with the College Council Executive Committee and its Budget Subcommittee, and will be meeting regularly until our plan is submitted to CUNY next month. We have already identified strategies that we feel can get us to this target, but this plan will entail continued austerity and innovation. Our major emphasis will be on increasing our enrollment, and our Recruitment and Admissions team will be hard at work here. So too must we redouble our retention efforts: although our Spring numbers were much better than anticipated, there were over 1,700 students who matriculated in Fall who did not return for spring. Retaining even a small percentage of that number would make a tremendous difference and we are currently reaching out to that population.

The University has also reinstated its version of our local vacancy review board (VRB), and essentially paused all job actions. I would not anticipate (m)any new hires in the coming months, although cases can certainly be considered on an ad hoc basis. I have also asked the Provost to continue working within Academic Affairs to ensure that our instructional capacity, our enrollments, and our budgets are all in sync in order to meet the targets required by our spending plan, while continuing to provide our students with the outstanding education they have come to expect. This includes a thorough review of seat utilization, class capacity, and workload to assure that our academic priorities are aligned with our financial reality, and that all relevant constituencies have been consulted about our path forward. Similar conversations will be held with non-academic units, so that there is “shared pain” and no one unit is disproportionately affected. I truly believe that process is as important as product, and that the manner in which we get to the end result is equally important to achieving our goal. I intend to speak to these issues more granularly at next week’s College Council. This consultative approach allowed us to move together productively in the Spring, and I urge everyone across campus to work together to ensure that this shared agenda continues for the next academic year. I remain confident that together we can reach our goals.

With all good wishes as we head into this holiday weekend,



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