



October 13, 2023

Colleagues:

These are emotionally and psychologically taxing times for us all – at CSI, throughout the Staten Island community, and beyond. And when emotions are high, tension increases. It is important that we check in on each other and offer one another support. As we navigate these difficult times, we need to treat one another with care, respect, and kindness, and not allow any form of violence or discrimination against anyone on our campus, regardless of our political, religious, or personal beliefs. It is important to me and to our campus community that we remain committed to providing a safe environment for all of our students, employees, and community members as we engage in sensitive conversations or debate. This commitment can be seen in statements released by our Office of [Public Safety](#), and in remarks made by the Chancellor. I and members of the administration have engaged in conversations with Public Safety, NYPD and community leaders to discuss concerns and enhanced safety measures. We will continue to engage in these efforts and will have additional campus safety coverage as long as necessary. This commitment is one that we take seriously here at CSI and we will not allow anyone to interfere with it.

The week opened with news of a horrific attack by Hamas terrorists against Israeli civilians, with reports of atrocities committed against non-combatants, including women and children. These actions were reprehensible and deserve our loudest and unequivocal condemnation. This was a [message delivered by our Chancellor](#), and echoed by local elected officials, whom I joined at a solidarity event on Tuesday at the Richmond County Jewish Cultural Center; and later that evening at an event in mid-town Manhattan; at my biweekly meeting with other Senior College Presidents; and again at Wednesday's Council of President's meeting. The common theme in all these meetings was that we must support our students and take care of ourselves.

As a public institution of higher education, we also have a solemn duty and legal obligation to allow for free expression of opinion. This was evidenced by a rally held on campus on Thursday, by “Students for Justice in Palestine.” The gathering was mostly civil and essentially peaceful, even if the views which were expressed—particularly coming so close to the aftermath of Saturday’s attack—were uncomfortable for many. Irrespective of one’s political ideology, the right to gather peaceably and the right to free expression of opinion and of speech is constitutionally guaranteed and legally protected. And we, as a public institution of higher education, are duty-bound to protect these rights.

I was scheduled to make a ten-day “Scholars as Bridge-Builders” tour of Israel—and to many of the regions so recently hit by terrorist incursions and Israeli counterattacks—in three weeks’ time. The images coming from that nation—and from war-torn Gaza and elsewhere—are heart-rending, and I cannot help but think of those affected.

I chose a career in education, in part because I believe that education presents opportunities to learn, to engage in dialog, and to become more nuanced in our approaches to and responses about, complicated issues. College is a place where one is exposed to different and often uncomfortable theories: exposure to new paradigms and perspectives is central to the learning process. Indeed, I hope that education and empathy are better at resolving differences than are rifles and rocks.

The coming weeks and months will be difficult and, at times, possibly frightening. Let us continue to work together to help ensure that all in our campus community feel safe, respected, and proud.

I wish you all a restful weekend, and a peaceful one, too.



Timothy G. Lynch, Ph.D. (he/him/his)
President, College of Staten Island
The City University of New York
2800 Victory Blvd, SI, NY 10314
718.982.2400