

Minutes of the One Hundred and Fifty-Ninth Meeting of the College Council  
Formed on November 14, 2002

Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023, 2:30pm – 3:25pm

Location: 1P-119 & Zoom Meeting

**CC Members in Attendance**

Zaghloul Ahmed, Neo Antoniadis, Comfort Asanbe, Warrick Bell, Alan Benimoff, Heidi Bertels, Jason Bishop, Vandana Chaudhry, Thomas Chen, Cynthia Chris, David Curcio, Christine Flynn Saulnier, Valerie Forrestal, Rosane Gertner, Kenneth Gold, Hernan Green, Patti Gross, Orit Gruber, Anusha Harris, Sheila Harris, Roshen Hendrickson, Michel Hodge, Susan Holak, Burnett Joiner, Wilma Jones, Sylvia Kahan, Patricia Kahn, Luke Katz, Catherine Lavender, Alfred Levine, Michael Levitas, Timothy Lynch, Lisa Manne, Natalia Pankratova, Lee Papa, Michael Paris, Ralf Peetz, Greg Philips, Keith Pisons, Sarah Pollack, Angelina Raio, Carlos Serrano, Glenn Garbe Sheehan, Suzy Shepardson, Susan Smith-Peter, Carles Solà Belda, Michael Steiper, Sarolta Takács, Thomas Tellefsen, Mikael Vejdemo-Johansson, John Verzani, Robert Wallace, Simone Wegge, Siona Wilson, John Wing, Cindy Wong, Mark Zdziarski, Sarah Zelikovitz.

**CC Members Via Zoom**

Alyson Bardsley, Deborah DeSimone, Clarissa Domingo, Yumei Huo, Sharon Loverde, Mary Murphy, Jonathan Peters, Mark Aaron Polger, Don Selby, George Wang, Mark White.

**Guests In-Person**

Jasmine Cardona, Sharon Christian, Jessica Collura, Veronica DiMeglio, Aleks, Dudek, Jennifer Durando, Stephanie Erichsen, Emmanuel Esperance, Stephen Ferst, Neila Green, Koby Kohulan, Mark Lewental, Chase Licata, Susan Massara, Tara Mastrorilli, Jessica Stein, Amy Stempler, Rosemary Vitale, Robert Yurman.

**Guests via Zoom**

Manuela Alongi, Khadijah Akter, Winsome Alston, Marwh Alzandani, Cesar Arena-Mena, Bilal A., Carol Brower, Barbara Cohen, Celeste Del Maestro, Danielle Dimitrov, Katrina Fama, Brian Farr, Lena Hamad, Doriann Hyland, Susan Imberman, Michele Karpeles, Rolla Khass, Jane Kisto, Koby Kohulan, Lisa Korchma, Lynne Lacomis, Jane Marcus Delgado, Leonardo Pignataro, David Pizzuto, Mary Quezada, Terri Sangiorgio, Donna Scimeca, Caterina Scarimbola, Joyce Taylor, Miriam Zidan

I. **Approval of the proposed agenda** – approved with no changes

II. **Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting** – approved with no changes

**III. Executive Committee of College Council Report – Kenneth Gold**

Good afternoon, everyone. It's been a busy couple of weeks. I want to start by announcing that our December meeting has been moved to December 14 at 2:30. I want to thank Jason Bishop for graciously allowing us to use the PSC's second Thursday meeting time slot. I also want to encourage department chairs to stick with their first Thursday time slot for department meetings in order to avoid time conflicts with the PSC and the College Council.

On Friday, Susan Smith Peter and I participated in a meeting of CUNY Faculty Governance Leaders chaired by our own John Verzani. We heard a presentation on Brightspace, the LMS slated to replace Blackboard. As we've heard before, CSI is in the third wave for implementation. The largest point of interest was the degree to which the navigation was or was not editable. Another topic was a comparison of campus governance provisions, which in my view, showed CSI in a positive light because of its bicameral structure that's embedded in our governance plan.

We also met with President Lynch, Provost Steiper, and Chief of Staff Collura on November 7 for our monthly consultation. We spent a lot of time talking about how the war between Hamas and Israel was affecting campus life. We encouraged the administration to be proactive in ways to foster dialogue, convey safety, uphold values of free speech, and pay heed to what might be labelled hate speech or incitement to violence. These are all key values for an academic institution to uphold but not always in harmony with each other. President Lynch has had to tread carefully and expressed his continued commitment to provide space for free speech, reassure student communities of their safety, and devise ways for healthy engagement between political opponents.

One other aspect that became clear is that it might not always make sense for CSI to wait until CUNY has responded to a situation. I would urge President Lynch to consult with his presidential colleagues who issue statements prior to the Chancellor.

We also spoke about staffing needs in various offices and heard an update about the Strategic Plan. When we commented that the timeframe appears very rushed, President Lynch explained that his hope for a short document would enable committees to complete their work in March; we took no issue with his desire for brevity but still countered that allowing the work to continue into the Fall 2024 term with completion and approval in December would produce a stronger strategic plan.

We continued to urge that the administration find a faculty member to chair the Department of Nursing, a principle with which the President and Provost agreed. We also learned of the Provost's interest in internships in the major and work on a report of what CSI departments are currently doing in this regard.

Finally, we learned that CUNY has again requested further budget details, particularly how we will close the budget gap completely over the next four years. The college will continue to project increases in enrollment with a peak at 12,500—a number that's a little higher than my comfort level but by no means an unobtainable overreach. Because of this ongoing back and forth with CUNY, we've postponed AVP Serrano's presentation to December and look forward to hearing from Keith Pisons today.

#### Q&A

As a follow up to what Kenneth Gold mentioned about Brightspace. VP Khan gave an update saying that the Navigation Bar was now customizable.

#### **IV. President's Report – Timothy Lynch**

President Lynch started his report with good news concerning enrollment. He was pleased to announce that the final numbers for enrollment at CSI had surpassed our target of 10,600, and, officially verified by the CUNY Office of Enrollment Management, is at 10,844 students. This number would largely determine our budget allocation for the next academic year. He congratulated everyone who had played a role in making this happen, all of those who engaged students inside and outside the classroom, including Vice President Hodge, Assistant Vice President Scott and the team at the Office of Recruitment and Admissions, the Provost, the Deans, and faculty. He mentioned that he and Vice President Hodge met with students this week and students expressed their appreciation for the extracurricular activities at CSI, including clubs and organizations and meeting faculty outside of non-teaching academic traditional spaces. He was grateful to all who were involved in meeting our students where they want to be served.

President Lynch continued with more good news about enrollment. He recently learned that applications CUNY-wide were up 400% for the next fiscal year. At CSI, applications were up over 200% - up 16% in FTEs for Winter 2024; up 34% in FTEs for Spring 2024 – all of which were positive signs that support our beliefs that within the next three years of the fiscal financial plan, we will be able to recoup a large percentage of the enrollment that we lost during the pandemic. He stated that our goal of 12,500+ students was aspirational but was not unrealizable to get us to our pre-pandemic numbers. This, he hoped, could be done through a combination of efforts – recruitment of new students, outreach to returning students, and improving our retention numbers, which saw a sizable increase this academic year. He believes we now have the mechanism in place to capitalize on improving the retention of our students.

In terms of the budget, President Lynch mentioned that CSI continues to thrust and parry with the University regarding the financial plan. They continue to ask for information and CSI continues to provide the requested information. President Lynch was hopeful in saying that he thinks we were close to getting our budget approved as the University has released some allocations to the campus and he appreciates our patience on this matter.

President Lynch concluded with wishing all a happy holiday over the upcoming Thanksgiving week and reminded everyone that it was also a season of giving. He announced that CSI has launched the CUNY Giving Tuesday campaign early and encouraged everyone to make a generous financial contribution, which will help our students stay enrolled and, more importantly, help us meet our mission of serving our students.

## **Q&A**

A question was asked as to whether the match for \$25,000 was still in place. President Lynch responded that CSI had set an aggressive goal for the month of November and that, yes, there was a match for the first \$25,000 by a generous supporter of CSI, Lorraine DePaulo. Donations received between the first of November and the thirtieth of November would count towards that goal.

While it was good news that enrollment was on the upswing for CSI, a question was raised about the parity of faculty/staff (which was currently at the lowest) to an increased enrollment to 12,500+. President Lynch responded that CSI was making strategic investments in faculty and staff where needed. He stated that he was moving forward with a half-dozen full-time tenure track lines. He mentioned that while they had worked hard to reduce the \$12 million FY23 structural deficit (the FY 24 structural deficit is currently projected to be \$8million), they also added staff by a count of 11. He added that they also hoped to hire in areas such as CASS and Financial Aid. He stated that CSI has had to make the case with the university for every single position to show how they were tied to enrollment, health and safety, or to our mission.

A comment was made to thank President Lynch for his strong affirmation of support for the First Amendment. President Lynch appreciated the comment and stated that the Council of Presidents had recently had a long conversation about how campuses can and should and have responded to issues of not just academic freedom but freedom of speech. He stated that they were being criticized about the timing of the notices and words that are used or not used. He stated that it was very important that, as an institution of public higher education, they defend the right to free speech, no matter how offensive or challenging or uncomfortable those words might be because that was what he was committed to do for this institution of public higher education.

A student via zoom expressed that Palestinian students at CSI were feeling underrepresented by the way President Lynch had addressed the Middle East conflict with Israel and Palestine. The student indicated that the way he had phrased the horrific attacks by Hamas and the counter attacks by Israel into Gaza was hurtful to Palestinian students. The student wondered how President Lynch could do better in representing the substantial population of Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab communities at CSI.

President Lynch admitted that he did not have the statement in front of him, so he could not recall the exact words. However, he recalled that there had been a significant outreach effort on the part of our administration to engage both the Muslim Student Association and the Students for Justice in Palestine. There were two meetings with those groups and also with their faculty advisors. They have also met with students and the faculty advisors from Hillel. They have offered to bring those two groups of students together with the assistance of a Rabbi and an Imam, offered to the campus by the university system. That offer was not warmly received by either of the student groups. But they will continue to engage with both groups and hope that they take us up on the offer of assistance. In addition, they have made many pronouncements about the support that we have for all members of our community, from mental health counseling to other resources, including a newly refurbished prayer and meditation room in 1C, where individuals can avail themselves of the resources at CSI. President Lynch concluded that he appreciated the question, and while they could all do better, he will work harder to make all members of our community, particularly our students feel safe, valued, and appreciated here at CSI.

The student followed up by saying that members of her community were not feeling welcomed, not to mention the high violence rate against the Muslim community, and that certain things were not being addressed, nor being responded to in a proper manner by the administration.

President Lynch urged the student to bring those concerns directly to his attention or to Vice President Hodge, Vice President for Student Affairs and Strategic Initiatives, and he promised that they will respond by close of business.

**a. Professional Staff Congress (PSC) Report**

Good afternoon to everyone and welcome to our 261<sup>st</sup> day at work without a contract. This is a busy time of the semester and there's a lot going on across the university, in our union, and there's a lot to promote and to tell you about. However, these things have to wait, because there are pressing issues for our campus that we all need to address today.

As many of you know, a special meeting of our chapter took place this week, a meeting that was called by petition. As you'll also know, we discussed a resolution that contained many sentiments that I think everyone here would agree with, namely the sadness and resentment—and anger—about the ongoing loss of life in Israel and Palestine. I'm also aware that many members of our chapter did not feel that the resolution in question fully represented their views, or that it fully took into account their pain, their lived experience or the increasing fear for their own safety that some members of our campus currently experience in their everyday lives in New York City. And there are yet many more members of our campus who would prefer that the Israel/Palestine issue not be a topic for discussion in the workplace at all. I want to acknowledge all of these views—clearly a diverse set of perspectives for the diverse community that we are.

The corollary of this diversity, however, is that our membership is divided—not just on just what's happening in the middle east, but what we as a union should be doing about it, if anything at all. This is a discussion that will continue. But what I do want everyone to know is that it is the position of most of the PSC leadership, our chapter leadership included, that these kinds of resolutions have been dividing us more than helping us. I would therefore like to encourage anyone who's bringing such resolutions to our chapter to please consider whether it's likely to truly represent our collective voice. Indeed, I encourage you to take the wording of your resolution to someone who you think will disagree with it; ask them how it makes them feel; ask them what they think is missing; and ask them to help you make it better and more inclusive. These resolutions represent the chapter's voice, which is not the same as our own individual voices. While we can use our collective voice to say strong and controversial things when we think they need to be said, the voice we say them with must truly be our collective one. My own vote and my own contribution to the discussion at tonight's PSC delegate assembly, where a similar resolution is being considered, will reflect these sentiments.

And one of the reasons I want to highlight how important our unity is, is because there are forces in society right now that are determined not just to divide our membership, but to put a wedge between higher education and the rest of American society. Some of you have heard about the defamation of students and faculty at other universities on the east coast, most prominently perhaps, Harvard. Today I need to tell you that this is coming to us at CUNY as well. Yesterday, trucks driven by a shadowy organization disingenuously called 'Accuracy in Media' were roaming the streets of Manhattan, carrying 15-ft electronic billboards that displayed the names and photos of faculty at Hunter College, declaring them antisemites. These are not legitimate announcements, but rather smears intended to harm and to intimidate. We should expect that we'll eventually find ourselves to be targets on this campus, too—not just faculty, but students

(as have been targeted at other universities this semester) and perhaps also members of the administration.

It is therefore important that when these things happen to us, we are not only not surprised, but prepared. I encourage department chairs to have discussions now, not later, with their departments about how they will handle attacks like these when they happen to their faculty or students. At our labor management meeting this month, the chapter will be encouraging CSI administration to develop a plan for protecting and defending our campus community as well. As we begin one of the most pivotal presidential election seasons in memory, in a national political environment that is increasingly partisan and increasingly difficult, we need to remember that there are those who wish to divide us and intimidate us. These are issues for us to address together as an institution—and through policy—not as individual faculty, staff, students or administrators.

**V. Report from the Administration – Keith Pisons, Director of Facilities Management, Planning, and Operations**

Keith Pisons was pleased to present updates on projects occurring on campus that were under his supervision. His presentation reported on the projects in the following categories: a) the sidewalk project (phase A), preparation for campus opening, Fall 2023 (painting of foyers of academic buildings, art gallery, ADA restroom in 1M); campus revitalization projects (campus beautification with plantings and removal of overgrowth, refurbishing of 1L entrance, power-washing around campus, mounting of art exhibit in 1P, retrofitted guard booth, and refurbished track and field); and newsletter circulation. Works in progress include the 2M Atrium financial stock ticker and 1A roof replacement. The presentation slides are attached to the minutes.

**Q&A**

A question was raised about the quality of the drinking water at water bottle fountains. Keith Pisons explained that our water travels through pipes from Upstate New York. And yes, some of those pipes are over 100 years old. He admitted that 6S has had issues in the past and that's why they provide bottled water over there. He stated that the drinking water on campus is good, and this is confirmed by an annual report from the state, which he can make available.

Provost Steiper asked Pisons to explain was about work order requests for repairs or maintenance. Keith Pisons mentioned that CSI was one of the first campuses to adopt the Archibus system just before the pandemic. He encouraged everyone to use it to generate work orders. The system prioritizes work to be done placing health and safety issues at the top all the way down to aesthetics at the bottom.

**VI. Reports of the committees of the College Council**

**a. Committee on Organization – None**

**b. By-Laws Committee – Kenneth Gold**

Kenneth Gold reported that the By-Laws committee held two town Halls in November. They received some feedback, and the committee hopes to meet after Thanksgiving to respond and resolve the issues brought to their attention.

**c. Administrative Review Committee – None**

**d. Institutional Planning Committee – Timothy Lynch**

President Lynch reported that the IPC met on Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The committee discussed curricular proposals brought forth by the Department of Social Work and the Chassanof School of Business. They also discussed the Strategic Planning Process for which working groups have been formulated for each of the five pillars. They also discussed taking into consideration AREC's report discussion on the last iteration of the Strategic Plan which called for closing the loop on the Strategic Plan.

**e. Budget Committee – Simone Wegge, Chair**

Simone Wegge reported that members of the College Council Budget committee will meet with President Lynch, Provost Steiper, and Chief Financial Officer Serrano on Monday, November 27, 2023. Just a few days ago, CUNY Central "blessed" the Fiscal 2023 financial reports. These reports for Fiscal 2023 (see page 443 for CSI) along with information for Fiscal 1Q24 are now posted on the Board of Trustees website. Here is a link:

<https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/trustees/meetings-of-the-board/Fin-AdminAgenda112023.pdf#page12>

Chief Financial Officer Serrano will be making a presentation of the College's Budget at the December 2023 College Council meeting on 12/14.

**f. Facilities Committee - None**

**VII. Student Government Report – Luke Katz**

Luke Katz, President of the Student Government Association (SGA), reported that the membership of their body now had 22 members and was functioning well. Upcoming activities of the SGA include:

- Adding two water bottle fountains each in every N and S building.
- Arranging for food service trucks to be in different spots on the campus, once a week, to provide free food to students. No incentives; just a way to brighten up a student's day.
- Providing funding to fill the gap for the activity fee in the CSI Association; SGA is one of several groups helping with the CSI Association's deficit.

Looking ahead, SGA is concerned about food security for our students. Through surveys, they found that one-third of our students are in need of food. As such, they are working on several ideas that include:

- Adding up to \$25 on Dolphin Cards for students in need
- Looking for gift cards from supermarkets to give away to students in need
- Looking for grants to support graduate school applications and for professional exams

**Q&A**

A member expressed appreciation of SGA's concerns for students in need of food. The member asked about plans to distribute food and gift cards. Luke Katz responded that they were looking

at Country Donuts for morning meals and the gift cards will be given in the afternoons to those who utilize the food pantry.

#### **VIII. Higher Education Officer Steering Committee Report - Suzy Shepardson**

The HEOSC met on Monday and provided updates on the work the members have been involved in, including the revisions to the By-Laws. It is important for all members of the College community to participate in both the review of the By-Laws Committee proposal and the actual voting on the proposal (when the time comes). Your feedback and input matters.

We also did some brainstorming for future events during the spring term. We're in stressful times, so ideas included coloring books, stress balls, yoga...and what's better than puppies and pizza? Cupcakes and kittens! Stay tuned for more information.

Please remember that the Professional Development Fund is available for use--but if you'd rather stay local and do something for free, take advantage of the programming being offered at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development! Now that the Center has expanded its focus and is reassessing its mission and functions, Wilma has asked our committee for recommendations of HEO-series staff to join the Center's Steering Committee, and we look forward to providing those to her shortly.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all a safe, happy, and peaceful holiday season.

#### **IX. Auxiliary Services Corporation Report – Robert Wallace**

Robert Wallace, Interim Vice President for the Division of Economic Development and Community Partnerships, reported on the following:

- Interviews for a new chief financial officer for Auxilliary Services to begin shortly as the posting has closed.
- Michael Ivany, former student and president of the Student Government Association, was brought on in the interim to fill this vacant position.
- Dolphin Card services has ordered new CSI gear for the holiday season
- Health and Wellness Expo brought over 1,500 people to campus on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and it was a successful event.

He expressed his sincere thanks to the Dining Services team (of Auxilliary Services) who were exemplary at the time of this event when their manager, Jodi Merendino, needed emergency surgery. Jodi had just returned home, and he urged anyone who knows her to send their best wishes.

X. Old Business - None

XI. New Business – None

Respectfully submitted by Wilma Jones  
Secretary, Executive Council of the College Council