

Minutes of the One Hundred and Sixtieth Meeting of the College Council
Formed on November 14, 2002

Date: Thursday, December 14, 2023, 2:30pm – 3:25pm

Location: 1P-120 & Zoom Meeting

CC Members in Attendance

Neo Antoniadis, Comfort Asanbe, Alyson Bardsley, Warrick Bell, Alan Benimoff, Heidi Bertels, Cynthia Chris, David Curcio, Christine Flynn Saulnier, Valerie Forrestal, Rosane Gertner, Kenneth Gold, Hernan Green, Orit Gruber, Anusha Harris, Susan Holak, Yumei Huo, 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, Jonathan Peters, Greg Philips, Keith Pisons, Sarah Pollack, Angelina Raio, Alex Scott, Carlos Serrano, Glenn Garbe Sheehan, Suzy Shepardson, Susan Smith-Peter, Carles Solà Belda, Michael Steiper, Sarolta Takács, Thomas Tellefsen, George Vachadze Mikael Vejdemo-Johansson, John Verzani, Simone Wegge, Siona Wilson, George Wang, John Wing, Mark Zdziarski.

CC Members Via Zoom

Zaghloul Ahmed, Winsome Alston, Jason Bishop, Vandana Chaudhry, Thomas Chen, Soon Chun, Clarissa Domingo, Sheila Harris, Michel Hodge, Sharon Loverde, Mary Murphy, Don Selby, Sarah Zelikovitz.

Guests In-Person

Chandan Acharya, Cheryl Adolph, Jessica Collura, Brian Cortijo, Andrew Diaz, Aleks Dudek, Emmanuel Esperance, Stephen Ferst, Neila Green, Joseph Lacerra, Jackie Lamberti, Georgia Landrum, Michael Lederhandler, Maria Levine, Mark Lewental, Chase Licata, Susan Massara, Simon Reader, Tara Mastroilli, Lisa Roe, Joanne Sagherian, Terri Sangiorgio, Donna Scimeca, Jessica Stein, Amy Stempler, Rosemary Vitale.

Guests via Zoom

Manuela Alongi, Michael Anderson, Cesar Arena-Mena, Maria Bellamy, Sharon Cammarano, Barbara Cohen, Christine Cohen, Cheryl Craddock, Celeste Del Maestro, Veronica DiMeglio, Danielle Dimitrov, Jennifer Durando, Catherine Ferrera, Stephanie Gardiner, Julie Guerrero, Dalia Kandiyoti, Michele Karpeles, Jane Kisto, Koby Kohulan, Lisa Korchma, Lynne Lacomis, Tara Mastrangelo, Lillian Nicassio, David Pizzuto, Mary Quezada, Daphne Rene, Janine Scotto, Byron Taylor, Joyce Taylor, Brenda Valentin

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. I hope your semester is winding down smoothly. We have a full agenda so I will be brief.

The Executive Committee met with President Lynch, Provost Steiper, and Chief of Staff Collura on December 5 for our monthly consultation. We spent a lot of time talking about the closing figures for FY

23 and the likelihood that CUNY would require the College to further reduce its structural deficit in FY 24, which is indeed the case. More to come on the budget from both President Lynch and AVP Serrano. We also discussed ways of reducing costs or expanding income-generating uses of the St. George facility and learned that AVP Scott is leading a committee of faculty, staff, and students to explore these very issues.

We also highlighted the importance of pomp and ceremony at the College even in a difficult budget climate. We informed the President that Convocation was not always lumped together with a Holiday party, encouraged some kind of public investiture for President Lynch, and urged the renewal of department exercises and an outside speaker at Commencement. I'm happy to report that departmental ceremonies can take place this spring, but still wish that the College could return to providing the key supports of seating and security as it has in the past.

Finally, we continued to monitor issues that I've discussed at previous meetings this fall, including campus climate, the strategic plan, and staffing in key offices.

Let me end by wishing you all a joyful holiday season. Thank you—any questions?

IV. President's Report – Timothy Lynch

President Lynch started his remarks by wishing everyone a happy holiday season. He remarked that having been at the College of Staten Island for almost 2 years, he continued to be amazed by the work being done by everyone, both inside the classroom and beyond.

President Lynch announced that CSI surpassed its ambitious goal for Giving Tuesday, a nationwide event focused on fundraising and philanthropy, by 30%. In fact, CSI doubled last year's take and this was thanks to the hard work of the Office of Institutional Advancement and the generosity of so many people who are friends of the campus. He also encouraged everyone to consider giving during the last two weeks of the calendar year, at a time when tax benefits are within grasp. He thanked members for their continued gifts to the College, but to more importantly, he was thankful for all the work that faculty and staff had done to help realize our goal.

While Giving Tuesday was just one example of the generosity he had observed on this campus, President Lynch spoke of the toy drive organized by the Bertha Harris Women's Center, which resulted in gifts of over 300 toys for families, particularly for children who have been affected by domestic and gender-based violence. Last month, our student athletes participated in the New York City Marathon, noting that it was events like these that make him proud to be not just the president of the College of Staten Island, but a member of the community. He, once again, thanked everyone for their generosity and support and for their willingness to go the extra mile or, in the case of the student athletes, the 26.2 miles.

President Lynch spoke about convocation and the celebration of service, recognizing 200 of our colleagues who served the college for intervals of 5 years, 10 years, and beyond. He mentioned that it was a good opportunity to meet with friends, co-workers, and colleagues, to celebrate their accomplishments and their achievements, to celebrate the end of a successful academic year, and to talk about a vision and a strategy for moving forward.

Next, President Lynch turned to the 2023 fiscal year budget, which was officially closed out on November 10th; noting specifically that the fiscal year ended on June 30, 2023. He prefaced his remarks about the final numbers that while it was disappointing on one level in that the year ended with a deficit, he was feeling incredibly optimistic because at the end of the first quarter of the last fiscal year, CSI was projected to end with a 12-million-dollar deficit. As late as the end of the third quarter, March 30th, CSI was projected to end with a deficit in excess of \$3.5 million. So, ending at \$4.1 million was not great, but by no means the end of the world. The projections for the 2024 fiscal year at the end of the first quarter were for an 8-million-dollar deficit. While one might wonder at the double number of where we ended last year, President Lynch's take on the matter is that this is 33% better than where CSI was at this point last year. He concluded that he was optimistic that CSI would end in a very favorable position relative to our projections in 2024.

Next, President Lynch addressed enrollment projections. To date, CSI was trending up about 9% for Spring 2024, ahead of where we were last fall [2022]. A rough calculation for every one percent that we exceed over our projections for a semester would bring about \$350,000.

At our last college council meeting, President Lynch noted that he had received questions from students regarding steps that his administration had taken to address campus climate as it affects both students who identify as Jewish and students who identify as Arab Palestinian. He noted that it has been a trying set of circumstances for all of us, most notably for our students who have deep personal and familial connections to the region. He announced that on January 30, 2024, CSI would be hosting a one-day symposium on recognizing and combating anti-Semitism. This will be followed within 2 weeks by a comparable symposium on recognizing and combating Islamophobia. He stated that he had contacted both student organizations, their faculty, staff and advisors, apprising them of resources available throughout the university and campus.

With that, he wished ever all the best for the holiday season.

Q&A

A question was raised asking the President to elaborate further on what he meant by "transferring the cost of campus-borne expenses to other entities" which he mentioned in the December 1st communication to the campus community. In response to this question, President Lynch said that CSI provides services to the City University of New York at cost to nobody but CSI. He shared two examples: 1) The HPCC, the High-Performance Computing Center, which is free to all users. It is listed as a CUNY resource, yet CSI bears all the costs, including personnel costs, electricity, internet, electricity, internet, which comes to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. He wants to see a change to that model where the PIs who use the HPCC will be charged for the facility and where CUNY will support CSI efforts. 2) The research facility is another. They are looking into the universal models, where the PIs would build into their grants to cover the cost of veterinarians, food, and bedding, etc. He indicated that he was working with the Provost to create a pay to use model that would and generate significant savings for the campus.

Another question raised asked the President to elaborate further on the budget and how it was that in May 2023 he stated we would end up at about zero and now we hear that CSI ended up with a deficit of about \$4 million. President Lynch responded that he truly expected to end the year flat. However, they only found out on Friday, November 10th at 4:55pm that CSI was looking at a deficit of about \$4.1

million. His optimism was rooted in two major assumptions. First, he was expecting the continued support from the university, wherein they habitually have provided to the campuses that are in trying circumstances. Over the past couple of years, CSI had received over \$2 million in fringe benefit savings. However, when the university closed its books and realized it was 126 million dollars in a hole, the College could hardly ask to borrow \$2 million. Second, the Cabinet made the strategic decision not to tap into the related entities (i.e. the Association, Auxiliary Services) to balance our books because they wanted to use those monies for some strategic investments on our campus. As an aside, he mentioned that everybody had commented on the look and feel of the campus and how nice it was to come back to a well-maintained academic environment. He reminded everyone that the administration also did not cut back on sabbaticals, nor did they cut back on fellowship leaves. These were investments that needed to be made. He concluded that if that meant coming a little bit short of our projected balanced budget, he would gladly stand by those decisions and take the heat because he believed that they were the right decision to make.

Another question that was raised asked whether CSI was one of the eight [*sic*] campuses that CUNY Central was demanding new cuts, and why. President Lynch replied that CUNY was not demanding cuts. He clarified that CSI was indeed one of the eight campuses because we finished the year in the red, and that we were also projected to finish this coming year in the red. CSI has been asked to provide a plan to the university by December 21, 2023. AVP Carlos Serrano has been working on that with him and with the College Council Budget Committee. We were asked to shave off \$2.1 million.

V. Professional Staff Congress (PSC) Report

Good afternoon, everyone. And for those who I won't see again till after the New Year—Happy Holidays! I have just a few updates to share with you all today.

Just this afternoon, PSC leadership was notified that 9 campuses at CUNY will be asked to make steep cuts to their budgets — and budget plans already submitted are apparently being rejected by the central office. There is one thing you can do now (which is not easy since we're all sitting in this meeting): register to speak at the upcoming hearing that CUNY is holding tomorrow at 11am. Despite its impending date and time, and that you have until just 5pm today to register, this hearing was just announced. There isn't, unfortunately, a remote option. (See the emails sent to you a few hours ago, by James Davis, and also by me, for a link).

And more bad news: we also heard today, through UFS channels, that VP/UP Wendy Hensel is circulating a policy indicating CUNY's intention to make Brightspace mandatory for all online classes — both asynchronous and synchronous — in the very near future. And I point out that this is a return to a policy that CUNY had appeared to back away from earlier this semester. Finally, on a somewhat better note, I want to say that labor management meetings have been very productive, and our chapter has made what I believe is real progress on a number of difficult issues this semester. I thank the administration for taking part in these meetings this semester; we look forward to continuing that work in the spring.

And I want to also thank you all of *you* today; you have been working for 289 days without a contract, and we have all been grappling with some very difficult and divisive issues this semester. But I also want to say that I have seen real and genuine comradery among the faculty and staff and, although I think we have a very difficult year ahead of us in 2024, I am optimistic that this campus will continue being a community that pulls together when it has to.

So, happy holidays to everyone, I hope you can recharge during the break, and on behalf of the chapter executive committee, I look forward to continuing to represent our chapter in the new year.

VI. Report from the Administration – Carlos Serrano, Vice President for Finance and Budget

AVP Carlos Serrano gave a high-level financial briefing on the CSI budget from FY 2022 through FY 2027 using three slides. The slides are attached.

The first slide showed bar charts of a financial summary of actual expenditures for FY 2022 and FY 2023 and projected numbers from FY 2024 through FY 2027. Year end balances for each year included line items for: 1) Tax Levy Budget, 2) Collections, 3) Stimulus/PY CUTRA, and 4) Expenditures. The charts also included actual and projected numbers of the structural deficit as a separate line item. Bottomline, the structural deficit remains, but shown as diminishing from \$12,460 in FY 2022 to \$2,331 in FY 2027.

The second slide illustrated the impact of enrollment on resources – showing revenue targets vs actual collections. Actual collections for FY 2022 and FY 2023 showed negative balances. Projections for FY 2024 through FY 2027 showed an increase in revenue, provided that the enrollment numbers continue to be on the upswing.

The third slide illustrated investments made in faculty and staff from Fall 2021 through Fall 2023. Overall, this chart shows an increase in personnel of 1.8%.

AVP Serrano concluded with next steps: CSI has been identified as one of 9 colleges required to submit a financial plan to reduce our structural deficit. For campuses that exceed their target, there is an incentive from CUNY. CUNY has committed to use a portion of \$37 million of unallocated state operating subsidy to eliminate the remaining portion of our structural deficit for FY24 and FY 25. This means we get an additional \$6million if we reduce our structural deficit \$2.1 million.

Q&A (no time after report; but questions were asked in the remaining time under Old Business)

VII. Reports of the committees of the College Council

a. **Committee on Organization** – No report

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

Kenneth Gold reported that the By-Laws committee held two town Halls in November. The revised proposal will be brought forward to this body in the Spring.

c. **Administrative Review Committee** – No report

d. **Institutional Planning Committee** – No report

e. **Budget Committee** – No report

f. **Facilities Committee – No report**

VIII. Student Government Report – No report

IX. Higher Education Officer Steering Committee Report - Suzy Shepardson

In brief, the HEO Steering Committee met with our colleagues who serve on the CSI Labor Management Committee and the CSI PSC-CUNY Chapter Executive Committee, for a conversation about HEO workload issues, reclassification processing concerns, and staffing matters (namely, the lag in filling vacancies and the need/expectation of current personnel to take on that additional work as it must still be completed).

She also thanked everyone who contributed to CSI reaching its fall enrollment target numbers. On behalf of the members of the HEO Steering Committee, she wished everyone a restful, peaceful, and peace-filled holiday season.

X. Auxiliary Services Corporation Report – No report

XI. Old Business - None

Q&A for AVP Serrano's report

Kenneth Gold emphasized the following about the budget report that in looking at the Structural Deficit numbers, it showed a decline from about \$12 to \$2, and enrollment growth over the next 4 years is projected to grow to 12,500. But, that enrollment growth does not get us out of the structural deficit in its entirety. Those numbers also depend on the State assuming the cost of a new contract.

A question was raised as to whether the reduction of the budget, which would primarily impact the hiring of additional faculty and staff, was being aligned with the strategic goals to increase enrollment to 12,500. The provost responded that faculty headcount had increased, mainly from lecturer lines, despite declining enrollments. The number of students added to class sections has been fewer than two students, on average. Kenneth Gold added that he, along with Simmone Wegge, and Jonathan Peters, was on the strategic planning group focused on resources. He stated that at their next meeting, he would get a better sense of how well the reduction of the structural deficit was aligned with this priority.

XII. New Business

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