

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

Date: Thursday, February 15, 2024, 2:30pm – 3:25pm

Location: 1P-119 & Zoom Meeting

CC Members in Attendance

Zaghloul Ahmed, Winsome Alston, Neo Antoniadis, Comfort Asanbe, Alyson Bardsley, Jason Bishop, Warrick Bell, Alan Benimoff, Holly Block, Cynthia Chris, Andrew Colbeck, David Curcio, Glenn Garbe Sheehan, Gene Fellner, Christine Flynn Saulnier, Valerie Forrestal, Kenneth Gold, Hernan Green, Sheila Harris, Roshen Hendrickson, Michel Hodge, Susan Holak, Burnett Joiner, Wilma Jones, Sylvia Kahan, Patricia Kahn, Carlo Lancellotti, Catherine Lavender, Michael Levitas, Andrew Leykam, Timothy Lynch, Lisa Manne, Mohammad Moussa, Lee Papa, Michael Paris, Ralf Peetz, Jonathan Peters, Greg Philips, Keith Pisons, Sarah Pollack, Alex Scott, Don Selby, 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, Mark Zdziarski, Sarah Zelikovitz.

CC Members Via Zoom

Heidi Bertels, Vandana Chaudhry, Clarissa Domingo, Maryann Feola, Rosane Gertner, Orit Gruber, Alfred Levine, Sharon Loverde, Mary Murphy, Mark White, Cindy Wong.

Guests In-Person

Cheryl Adolph, Stephanie Allen, Michael Anderson, Sharon Cammarano, Jessica Collura, Brian Cortijo, Danna Curcio, Nina DelGatto, Veronica DiMeglio, Michael Dreher, Aleks Dudek, Jennifer Durando, Valkiria Durán, Stephen Ferst, Neila Green, Jackie Lamberti, Georgia Landrum, Michael Lederhandler, Mark Lewental, Chase Licata, Carey Marigold, Susan Massara, Tara Mastroilli, Laxmi Ramasubramanian, Terri Sangiorgio, Donna Scimeca, Jessica Stein, Amy Stempler, Brenda Valentin, Rosemary Vitale.

Guests via Zoom

Maria Bellamy, Marta Cabral, Stefan Charles-Pierre, Barbara Cohen, Linda Conte, Celeste Del Maestro, Danielle Dimitrov, Emmanuel Esperance, Brian Farr, Katrina Fama, Doriann Hyland, Linda John, Dalia Kandiyoti, Michele Karpeles, Jane Kisto, Lisa Korchma, Lynne Lacomis, Leonardo Pignataro, David Pizzuto, Janine Scotto, Byron Taylor, Joyce Taylor, Priscilla Villacis.

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 off to a great start. The call for Dolphin Award nominations is out and I encourage you all to organize and nominate yourselves or colleagues—we have so many people here worthy of recognition.

The Executive Committee met with President Lynch, Provost Steiper, and Chief of Staff Collura on February 6 for our monthly consultation. We began by discussing DEI efforts at the College due to

Jonathan Wesley's departure. We learned that the HERI survey on the workplace, distributed to CSI administrative staff and adjunct faculty, is completed and an *ad hoc* committee to review and evaluate the results is being formed. The President is taking some time to rethink the structure of the Chief Diversity Officer; particularly the combination of compliance and programmatic responsibilities.

Our discussions about the budget are ongoing. We congratulated the administration on surpassing our enrollment targets for the spring semester, and learned that discussions remain ongoing with CUNY, which nixed the use of one-time sources of revenue to achieve the mandated reduction of our structural deficit. CUNY Executive Vice Chancellor Hensel has stepped into the budget discussions with a controversial memo that outlined a host of unpalatable approaches to reducing the costs of instruction. Susan and John will likely provide more details in their reports, but at our meeting we urged and received assurances that the appropriate governance structures will be used should the College consider some of the especially draconian approaches. In the case of the College Council, that would mean the involvement of its Budget and Institutional Planning committees. I do want to commend the President for not relying on CUNY's playbook to date, unlike Queens and other CUNY campuses, and share that we urged him to resist CUNY interest in system standardization.

We then shifted to the CUNY High Performance Computing Center; a misnomer given the historic lack of sufficient support from CUNY. Recent power surges have damaged equipment and taken the HPC out of action, much to the dismay of CUNY faculty who rely on it. The administration has already accelerated discussions with CUNY about addressing this immediate need and determining a long-term funding model. We are pleased to report it is not letting a crisis go to waste.

We tangled over last minute disruptive changes to the spring course semester, primarily one affecting graduate students, staff and faculty in the School of Education. When the administration identified concerns about the schedule, its solution was to solve the problem using a hammer with an impact on all SOE graduate students and faculty rather than working with the dean and department chairs to remedy cases that really required it. We contended that some challenges are school, division or college wide and warrant a large scale and single solution, but others are not. In general, we encourage our colleagues in the administration not to frame or treat issues as uniformly pervasive when most require close working out with the appropriate deans, chairs, and faculty.

We concluded with a brief discussion of commencement planning. As was mentioned last fall, departmental ceremonies will take place but not in the previously used locations outside of academic buildings, which require the set up and breakdown of additional chairs. The administration is working to identify enough suitable indoor locations and time slots for every department or school. This effort is worthwhile, and we're pleased the administration is making it.

IV. President's Report – Timothy Lynch

President Lynch started his remarks by wishing everyone a Happy New Year, and in advance to those who will soon be celebrating the New Year of the Dragon.

He started off his report with the good news about enrollment for spring 2024 which he said was strong. CSI had set an ambitious goal of 10,071 students for spring 2024; however, the most recent numbers were at 10,246. That was 150+ in FTE in Head Count, but we were waiting to see what the final FTE

number was. He emphasized that for every 1% increase in FTE, that brought in an additional \$350,000 to our budget. He alluded to the fact that AVP Scott's report would provide granular details on enrollment.

Next, he mentioned the good news concerning our budget deficit. Following up on what he had reported at the December meeting, he stated that at the start of FY24, we were projected to end the year with a deficit of roughly \$8million, but by mid-year, we predicted a year-end deficit of roughly 5.5M). He assured us that we were moving in the right direction and that our savings target of \$2.1 million dollars was well within our reach. We now had four months left in the fiscal year, and he said we were trending positive. President Lynch was pleased to report that this was largely due to the growth in enrollment and some marginal increases in academic efficiencies. He assured us that all this had been done without resorting to austerity or draconian measures (the latter used by Kenneth Gold) that we had seen at other campuses both in the system and beyond. Queens College had let go of two dozen lecturers. Some campuses at SUNY and in Pennsylvania were shutting down. Even though CSI was facing a \$2.1 million budget deficit reduction, he was glad to say that CSI was in a very good position, and we were on a path out of some dangerous times. This was all due to collaboration, consultation, and the respect for shared governance and communication among colleagues.

He was also pleased to report that campus climate initiatives, undertaken as part of CUNY and other initiatives, have garnered CSI some positive press and some feelings of goodwill, camaraderie, and collegiality. On January 30, 2024, CSI hosted a symposium on combating anti-Semitism. There will also be a symposium on recognizing and responding to Islamophobia, tentatively scheduled for the week of April 9th. The date was pushed back to accommodate the Ramadan holidays.

Another positive community engagement that happened at the end of January was when the College hosted the Chancellor, members of his cabinet, local elected officials and community partners. This event was held to thank them for their support and their partnership. He reminded them of the impact that CSI had on their operations, which was that for about every dollar that was invested in CUNY, \$9 comes back to the local community. An investment in CUNY is an investment in the community. He emphasized that this was also a message that he would convey to elected officials while in Albany, the next day.

Next, President Lynch shared good news on student engagement. CSI's student athletes were doing well, particularly in basketball. The men's team was currently ranked second in the conference and CSI would likely be hosting a playoff game. The women's team was also expected to make the playoffs for the East Coast conference. More importantly, the most recent reports from our athletic director indicated that our student athletes were doing phenomenally well in terms of their academics. The collective GPA for our student athletes for the fall semester was 3.2 and there were a large number, (~10), who had a perfect 4.0 GPA. He thanked Chase Licata and his team and Christine Flynn Saulnier, faculty representative, for the work that they do to get our students into such a positive place.

Other student engagement activities centered around the recent winter involvement fair. This included opportunities for student engagement with activities on campus, including the opening of a new exhibit to follow the Faculty Senate this afternoon. This exhibit featured the work of faculty member Miguel Aragon.

Lastly, President Lynch expressed his thanks to Keith Pisons and his team for their hard work during and after the recent snowfall. The entire campus was ploughed, except for his parking spot. On a different note, he stated that improvements to the 2M building of the Chazanoff School of Business were forthcoming. A stock market ticker was going to be installed shortly, and he congratulated the Dean and faculty on this accomplishment.

With that, he ended his remarks and remained available to answer any questions. There were no questions.

V. Professional Staff Congress (PSC) Report

Good afternoon, everyone. I have just a few quick updates to share with you all today.

Bargaining continues into our 50th week without a contract. I encourage all those who are interested to attend a bargaining session! You just need to first attend a one-hour orientation (on Zoom); the next one of those is Feb 21st from 6:30-7:30 pm. The next bargaining session is Thursday, Feb 29, 12:30pm until 5:30pm at the PSC office at 25 Broadway.

If you are looking to get involved in contract-related action, there are also demonstrations planned across CUNY around the one-year anniversary of our contract's expiration at the end of the month. This includes our own campus. If you'd like to take part, please reach out to me, or to Jonathan Cope (who leads our campus action team).

On February 28th, there will also be union action in Albany, by the PSC, along with NYPIRG, the CUNY Rising Alliance, union chapters from SUNY, among other groups. You can find information about that on the PSC's website.

Finally, we've just scheduled our two semesterly labor-management meetings with the president and his team; those will take place on March 14th and May 2nd. As always, members can reach out to me with any contractual or workplace issues they'd like to see us bring up.

Q&A

A question was raised about the on-campus event on February 29. Jason Bishop responded that there was a plan to have a demonstration in protest of the expired contract. Members who would like to participate are encouraged to wear red. He encouraged interested members to reach out to the chapter to help influence and develop the plan for that day's event.

VI. Report from the Administration – Alex Scott, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Dean of Admissions

AVP Scott was happy to present a positive enrollment picture. In brief, CSI exceeded our enrollment projections. Currently there are 10,246 students enrolled at CSI and we had forecasted 10,072; this was just about 1.7% above our forecast and a full 2% above spring 2023. He noted that Freshmen were up 3.8% and transfers were up 4.1%. He noted a slight shift in numbers as the drop period deadline was yesterday. Other highlights of his presentation showed Spring 23 vs Spring 24 numbers for CSI as compared to Senior Colleges, Comprehensive Colleges, and Community Colleges. Looking forward, he shared new recruitment initiatives for the next academic year. These included: (i) increased digital

advertisements; (ii) a physical space for a re-connect center; and (iii) outreach to fall 2025 students' population, those who are juniors now. He ended his report by asking faculty and staff for their support in participating in either or all the following: (i) the admitted students conference in March and April; (ii) Master Classes (where CSI faculty present courses they teach at a high school); and (iii) Dolphin Day (mock classes for high school students come to CSI for day). The slide presentation is attached.

Q&A:

In response to a question about CSI's conversion rate from admitted to committed students? Alex Scott responded that CSI traditionally had a 25% conversion rate of admitted students to those who commit to the college. Thereafter, there was another 7% loss, leaving 18% who finally enter the classroom. He expects this number to be higher this fall given the increase in applications and CUNY's waived application fee.

A two-part question: (a) whether CSI had been exposed to the FAFSA rollout that was being bungled at the federal level and (b) if the governor gets her way to have the top 10% of high school students of each class automatically admitted to CUNY and SUNY, there was some concern that this will siphon students into other campuses than ours. In answer to question a, the answer was yes. Students will not be able to get their FAFSA packages until, at the earliest, end of May. May 1st is usually the deadline that students are asked to commit to different colleges. There is a conversation taking place presently to move that deadline back, at least for CUNY. In the meantime, students might have to make their decisions earlier without a financial aid package. In the meantime, CUNY has embarked on a campaign to drive students to the net price calculator to see an estimate of the award package. In answer to part b, Alex Scott said yes, in the case of those students who were not accepted into schools that have high academic profiles, they may opt to go there [to other CUNY schools than ours].

VII. Reports of the committees of the College Council

a. Committee on Organization – Warrick Bell

Warrick Bell reported that there remains a lot of vacant seats on the Faculty Senate and college council. He listed the following as having no representatives:

Faculty Senate and College Council:

Department Representatives needed from 1) Educational Studies and 2) Physics and Astronomy. [Gene Fellner made a correction from the floor that he was now the Educational Studies representative and no longer the alternate]

Faculty Senate Committees

Academic Facilities: Two seats designated for School of Education and School of Health Sciences

Academic Technology: One seat for School of Health Sciences; and one At-large seat

Admissions: one At-large seat

Course & Standing: one At-large seat

Research: one At-large seat

b. By-Laws Committee – No report

- c. **Administrative Review Committee** – No report
- d. **Institutional Planning Committee** – No report
- e. **Budget Committee** – Simone Wegge

Good Afternoon Everyone and Happy Valentine's Day!

The entire Budget Committee of the College Council (Drew Poje, Sharon Christian, Dan McCloskey, Ken Gold and myself) met with President Tim Lynch, CFO Carlos Serrano and Chief of Staff Jessica Collura on Tuesday, January 30th.

CSI is one of the 9 colleges that the chancellor's office is closely monitoring in terms of finances. Recall that we ended Fiscal 2023 with a \$4 million operating budget deficit. We are past the middle mark of Fiscal 2024; a few months ago, the projected deficit for this year was approximately \$8 million. The Central Office has instructed us to reduce this deficit by \$2.1 million for the current fiscal year. To this end, a few weeks ago CFO Serrano submitted a plan, a Program to Eliminate the Gap (or PEG), to the Central Office to accomplish these savings and get the deficit down to \$5.5 million. If we get to this point, CUNY will cover the rest of the deficit, specifically \$5.5 million.

The savings plan for 2024 involves relying on our usual amount of attrition as well as usual delays in hiring staff. Note that the CUNY VRB is still in force; Deans, please speak with the Provost in terms of what these means for faculty and staff lines. Our administrators expressed confidence that we are on track to get down to \$5.5 million. Fiscal 2025 will involve more long-term approaches to shrinking down our structural deficit.

Note that last year, Fiscal 2023, we used about \$10 million in federal funding for our operating budget. We do not have that federal funding anymore. How are we then making up for this? Fortunately, our enrollment increased between spring 22 and spring 23, making our state/city appropriation of funds from the state and city government a few million dollars higher for this year; in addition, higher enrollment means more tuition revenue. We are still a few million short though for 2024 in terms of what we need to pay all of our bills, and hence that savings plan.

On the optimistic side, we are fortunate that we experienced another increase in enrollment for the spring 2024 over last year (4.5%). This involved people across the college working hard on admissions, retention and enrollment initiatives.

In your reading of higher education news, you may have learned that a number of major universities are experiencing financial stress, including the University of Arizona, the University of West Virginia, UNC-Greensboro, the University of Connecticut, the two state systems in Pennsylvania, and the University of Chicago. Nearby, New Jersey City University has undergone major cuts, and many of the colleges in the SUNY system have experienced large enrollment decreases. Some of the budget crises happen because some types of revenues and expenses are hard to predict and can change a lot over a short period of time and create major budget stress.

Such news makes one wonder what we should be concerned about here at CSI. It is clear from my discussions with CFO Serrano that our major downside risk is a drop in enrollment. A second type of downside risk would be a cutoff of some amount of funding by the State of New York, like what is happening in Connecticut; this seems less likely, although not impossible.

The main driver of our budget is enrollment. We are blessed to be on an island and the only public college here. You may be interested to see what the different age-cohorts are on Staten Island. *These census data are from 2022 and show that the 5-9 and under 5 cohorts are smaller than the teenage year cohorts. If these cohorts remain stable in size, we will have a smaller pool to draw students from in about 7 or 8 years.

Thus, it is important that we consult the enrollment dashboard on our website, that we get regular updates on the finances from Carlos Serrano and on enrollment and population from Alex Scott and that all of us here at the college recognize our own individual connection to our students.

Thank you All!

*U.S. Census Data for Staten Island:

https://data.census.gov/profile/Staten_Island_borough,_Richmond_County,_New_York?g=060XX00US3608570915

f. **Facilities Committee** – No report

VIII. Student Government Report – No report

IX. Higher Education Officer Steering Committee Report - Suzy Shepardson

The prevailing theme of today's meeting, and our most recent HEO Steering Committee meeting, appears to be "Get Involved", as we spent a great deal of time talking about involvement opportunities.

- We first debriefed about the Provost search and discussed the importance of participating in candidate town halls and providing feedback—being in the room where the conversations are happening matters.
- We also talked about professional development opportunities—not just those offered off-site by CUNY, but those held locally. Our own Center for Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development has a lot of events planned for this semester, and now, under the stewardship of Professor Wilma Jones and as a reflection of their revised mission and goals, their Steering Committee now has six HEO-series members.
- Participation in union activities matters, as the PSC-CUNY is the union for ALL of us, and we need to be seen and heard. Go to a bargaining session at 25 Broadway or CUNY Central after attending the mandatory orientation session! I thought I knew about contracts and what went on at bargaining sessions, but I was mistaken. It's an eye-opening experience, and our physical presence sends a message that we give a damn about what is happening.
- Go to events on campus to support our students and their families—the open houses, the Admitted Student Conferences, the sporting events, Senior Night on February 28th for the women's and men's

basketball teams. They notice, and it's part of being responsible community members and CSI ambassadors.

- Bring a buddy with you to the next College Council/Faculty Senate meeting—a HEO, a CLT, a CA, a Gittleson, a student. Bring someone you know so that they can see what's involved in College governance and managing our institution. Maybe that will be the "thing" that encourages them to get involved!

X. Auxiliary Services Corporation Report – No report

XI. Old Business - None

XII. New Business

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