

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

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2026, 3:30pm – 4:25pm

Location: 1P-119 & Zoom Meeting

CC Members in Attendance

Jane Alexander, Neo Antoniadis, John Arena, Comfort Asanbe, Banu Aslanertik, Warrick Bell, Alan Benimoff, Holly Block, Paolo Cappellari, Vandana Chaudhry, Andrew Colbeck, Brian Cortijo, David Curcio, Deborah DeSimone, Valkiria Durán-Narucki, Aris Efting, Gene Fellner, Kenneth Gold, Hernan Green, Patti Gross, Susan Holak, Nathalia Holtzman, Eric Ivison, Emma Johnson, Burnett Joiner, Wilma Jones, Patricia Kahn, Anatoly Kuklov, Catherine Lavender, Rob Lovering, Timothy Lynch, Alan Lyons, Lisa Manne, Lucas Marchante-Argon, Tara Mastrorilli, Dan McCloskey, Christine McEvilly, H. Ege Ozen, Ralf Peetz, Jonathan Peters, Tobias Schaefer, Alexander Scott, Carlos Serrano, Suzy Shepardson, Carles Solà Belda, Sarolta Takács, John Verzani, Michael Volpe, Robert Wallace, Simone Wegge, Siona Wilson, John Wing, Mark Zdziarski, Sarah Zellikowitz, Kelly Zyko.

CC Members Via Zoom

Alfred Levine, Catherine Paradiso.

CC Members Absent:

Zaghloul Ahmed, Paul Archibald, Lorianne Crowder, Clarisse Domingo, Valerie Forrestal, Ismael Garcia-Colón, Rosane Gertner, Yumei Huo, Carlo Lancellotti, Jeanne-Rachel Leroux, Philippe Marius, Angie Mekki, Vincent Mirabella, Jackson Mushnick, Michelle Pasaca, Mark Aaron Polger, Angelina Raio, Gabriella Rosales, Madona Shaker, Thomas Tellefsen, Allen Tesdall, Christina Tortora, Paola Ureni, Cindy Wong, Gaolan Wu, Ashley Villalva, Kelly Zyko.

Guests In-Person

Michael Anderson, Damien Andrade, Anita Bulan, Stefan Charles-Pierre, Jessica Collura, Jonathan Cope, John Dixon, Aleks Dudek, Jennifer Durando, Emmanuel Esperance, Katrina Fama, Stephen Ferst, Maya Gorda, Ruta Gordon, Orit Gruber, Qiao-Sheng Hu, Jeremiah Jerkiewicz, Michael James Lawless, Michael Lederhandler, Michael Mandiberg, Jane Marcus-Delgado, Susan Massara, Christina Mesa, Dimitrios Pavlidis, Michael Plishchin, Laxmi Ramasubramanian, Lisa Roe, Michael Romano, Terri Sangiorgio, Donna Scimeca, Jessica Stein, Amy Stempler, Nelli Tournaki, Dana Trimbolli, Brenda Valentin, George Wang, Rhoda Wilson, Leora Yetnikoff.

Guests via Zoom

Manuela Alongi, Barbara Cohen, Christine Cohen, Sharon Christian, Celeste Del Maestro, Nicolas Durst, Catherine Ferrara, Antonio Gallego, Linda John, Tasheema Johnson, Koby Kohulan, Thomas Lauria, Tara Mastrangelo, Mary Murphy, Doriann Pieve-Hyland, David Pizzuto, Carly Racioppi, Mona Rosenstock, Janine Scotto, Joyce Taylor.

- I. **Approval of the proposed agenda** – approved.
- II. **Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting** – approved with no changes

III. Executive Committee Report – Kenneth Gold, Chair of College Council

Good afternoon and welcome back. I hope you've taken the time visit the undergraduate research conference on your way in. The Executive Committee met with President Lynch, Interim Provost Holtzman and Chief of Staff Collura on April 21 for its monthly consultation.

President Lynch reported on the continued positive outlook regarding the budget, which we'll hear more about during AVP Serrano's report later this meeting. He noted that FinFest—a week with daily activities for students was well underway. I hope we will hear how he fared at the dunk tank. He shared his excitement for the upcoming CSI Gala, at which former faculty member Donna Gerstle was honored along with other supporters of the College.

We inquired about campus improvement projects that appear to be stalled. We learned that work delays on the 1A and 2A first floor entryways as well as on the academic buildings' side entry ways were largely due to DASNY. We were encouraged to learn that CUNY will be allowed to take over management of certain DASNY projects, including the door entryways. Believe it or not, CUNY offers better prospects for moving projects along than DASNY. Given that on commencement day many guests use the restrooms in 1A and 2A, we advised that signage directing guests to the side entryways would be most useful. More generally, we urged that publicizing project timelines and updates be prioritized and learned of plans to do just that via the website.

We spoke at great length about commencement. We learned that departmental ceremonies would occur as they had last year with a couple of changes in location. We spoke about the likelihood of protests during the commencement ceremony and how the college has fulfilled its obligation to provide a proximate and visible site for any collective action. We also discussed the frustration that many commencement participants experience when the noise from protests intrudes on the ceremony because the protesters have refused to relocate to the designated area by the 1A bus stop. In the past, this noncompliance by the protesters has led President Lynch to request police assistance on campus. Finally, we discussed how some students and faculty, myself included, remain outraged by the President's decision to pre-record student commencement speeches. We were heartened, however, to learn that there are four finalists for valedictorian and salutatorian.

Our last topic was the schedule for on-campus interviews for positions in academic affairs. During the search for a provost, President Lynch expressed surprise that the search committee was meeting with the finalists, as this practice is at odds with how CUNY runs a search. It is, however, longstanding practice at CSI. For example, three members of the provost search committee, myself included, recalled how previous searches—one for a provost, one for a dean, and one for the registrar—all included interviews with the search committee on the day of the visit. We believe this practice is useful because it allows for deeper probing than is possible over a 30-minute zoom session, and it allows the search committee to be an active part of the effort to sell CSI to the finalists. We raised the issue to forestall any future conflict with the administration over this matter, but I'm not sure whether we will be successful as President Lynch is mulling it over.

Have a great finish to your semester. We meet again in three weeks on May 21st and I'll see you then.

IV. President's Report – Timothy Lynch

President Lynch began his report with the news of the smashing success of last week's Gala. As the signature fundraising event of the year, the event raised more money than any other in our college's history. At the May meeting of the College Council, Dana Trimboli, Associate Administrator in Charge of Business Development, will provide more details about the Gala, along with an update on other fundraising activities and philanthropy from a more global perspective. In the meantime, he extended his gratitude to all who attended or supported one way or another.

President Lynch mentioned the Undergraduate Research Conference that was taking place concurrently in the atrium of 1P. He expressed pride in having seen close to 140 posters presented by over 250 students spanning across the sciences, the liberal arts, the social sciences, the humanities, performing and creative arts. He stated that it was wonderful to see the work of our students and gratifying to hear of the mentorship that our faculty provided to them.

President Lynch indicated that Fin Fest had happened a week ago and was wonderful. He said that it was a great opportunity for students to express their engagement with college campus life. Over 850 individuals turned out at the barbecue, and a few hundred dollars were raised for the food pantry. He was already looking forward to the next iteration next year.

President Lynch appealed to members in the room to complete the mandatory compliance trainings that are required by CUNY (i.e., eSPARC, Workplace Violence, Cyber Security and the others) and to do so before the end of the semester. He noted that this was something the Chancellor took seriously, and presently CSI was lagging behind other colleges in the system.

Lastly, President Lynch turned to plans for Commencement. He stated that he was aware that there had been a fair amount of conversation and consternation about the decision to pre-record student speeches this year. He mentioned that he believed he had thoroughly explained his position often and well; albeit that it had been met with some frustrations. He stated that moving forward, not this year, he will convene a task force to review the entire slate of commencement day activities -- whether students should walk across the stage, have the names of students read, deliver speeches in real time or have them pre-recorded, have departmental ceremonies on campus or off campus. He admitted that had already accepted some of the recommendations from the Task Force (*sic*) led by Ken Gold, Chair of College Council. He concluded by saying that, in the four-and-a-half years he had been at CSI, he believed that he had proven that he was willing to have conversations. Nevertheless, the decision to pre-record student speeches, a month from now, remained with good reasons and he would happily answer any questions.

Q&A

Several questions were asked of President Lynch pertaining to reasons for the decision to have student speeches pre-recorded. President Lynch mentioned one that came to light the day before where students who had been selected for salutatorian/valedictorian admitted that they were uncomfortable addressing a live audience and would not have applied to be valedictorian/salutatorian had they been required to do so. Among other reasons, this decision would protect the speaker, protect the campus from repercussions, or avoid potential fallouts from current funders. His response to the landslide vote of the Faculty Senate's resolution objecting to his decision to "ban in person student addresses at

commencement,” was that while he valued and respected the faculty, he remained unmoved and stood by his decision, at least for this year.

Other comments made from the floor expressed concerns about the message being sent to students and the community, suggesting that the decision undermines the students' ability to express themselves live, which contradicts the message of preparing students to be effective communicators; followed by a question about what would happen when students who wished to speak live. In response, President Lynch further defended his decision, stating that it was about appropriate timing, place and manner, and not a censorship issue. For this year, the ground rules were clearly communicated to prospective student speakers that their remarks would be pre-recorded, and they agreed to the terms.

Ken Gold brought the Q&A to a close because of time constraints and gave a summary to a question that went unanswered regarding reasons for the President’s decision. He prefaced his summary by saying that part of the challenge was that several bodies have heard different reasons emphasized at different times. Gold recollected the President’s example [today] of student speakers who preferred to be pre-recorded, which was the first time some members of the College Council were hearing of it. Gold understood the issue to be primarily about avoiding a speaker who would go off script in a way that would be controversial or embarrassing to the college and to its potential donors and constituents. President Lynch did not disagree with this statement.

V. Professional Staff Congress (PSC) Report – Jonathan Cope

Jonathan Cope, Chair of the CSI PSC-CUNY chapter, began his report by thanking Valerie Forrestal and Alyson Bardsley for filling in for him at the last two occasions of College Council. He noted that it was a nice reminder that the core of the work of our union was shared among all of us. His report highlighted the following:

May Day

Many members were wearing red to work today in support of wearing Red for Higher Ed.

Friday, May 1st: May Day -- at 3:00pm, we will convene with other area higher education unions at the **New School** before making our way at 4:30pm to Washington Square Park in Manhattan for a rally and march, stepping off at 5:30pm ending at Foley Square. I hope to see you there!

Commencement

At our last Labor Management meeting we asked the President to follow the recommendations of the governance committee--he has maintained his intention to continue to prerecord speeches by the valedictorian students. The Faculty Senate just passed a resolution calling for the reinstatement of live, in-person commencement speakers.

This group approached the CSI PSC-CUNY Chapter to endorse the rally, and we have. For two main reasons:

1. Free speech is a core value of academic unions. We all became educators to encourage our students to use their voices--whether we agree with them or not.
2. Overruling the recommendations of legitimate faculty governance bodies should be of concern to every PSC-CUNY member at CSI.

Health and Safety

We continue to encourage members to report concerns about workplace hazards on campus. This year we have begun our semesterly health and safety committee meetings but could always benefit from the engagement of more members. If you see a workplace hazard, please say something. First, submit a work order with the person in your department/office who has access to the Archibus system and follow up with me (jonathan.cope@csi.cuny.edu) with your concerns.

In our last labor management meeting, we expressed our concerns that college was unsafe on the first day back after the major blizzard in February, and it emerged that our college has no freedom to move classes online. If members are concerned about this, I think opening a conversation about how to persuade CUNY to give our campus the autonomy to do this next year would be a worthwhile endeavor.

VI. Report from the Administration – Financial Report by Chief Financial Officer Carlos Serrano

Carlos Serrano began his report by reminding the body that his last presentation was on November 20, where he had reported on two things: 1) how CSI ended last fiscal year, ending June 30, 2025; and 2) a fiscal outlook for the current year based on the university's first quarter financial report that was released in November. For this report, his agenda had two items: 1) update on the current year's financial report based on the mid-year report released from CUNY, and, 2) progress on next year's financial plan, and the University's request for three years out, i.e., July 2027 through June 2030.

Serrano displayed a one-page chart that showed that CSI had made significant progress in reducing its structural deficits from 2023 to the present year. Consistent with the first quarter and second quarter reports, he was confident in our projections to end this fiscal year in good financial standing. While CSI remained a campus of high concern, along with five other campuses, he reported that CSI was recognized for our year-over-year increasing enrollment and retention numbers.

Next steps: Serrano reported that campuses are required to maintain a minimum reserve level of 5% of their college's initial allocation for CSI. For this year, CSI is required to have \$5.2 million, and since we have not made the 5% stabilization reserves, CSI was required to attend mandatory recurring meetings with CUNY and CSIS leadership to monitor progress. Three of those meetings have happened, to date. The next meeting with CUNY was scheduled for May 15th to update Quarter, as well as the out years with a particular focus on Fiscal 27.

Q&A

In answer to the question as to whether CSI would remain a campus of high concern until its CUTRA [i.e., reserves] is at 5.2 million, Serrano gave an unequivocal yes and added that this had been expressed to him repeatedly by the University Budget Office.

A question was asked about a breakdown of non-faculty hirings at the college. Serrano responded that he could make that available.

Another question raised wondered about what ideas or plans did CSI have going forward for fiscal 2027 given the enrollment cliff nationwide, closure of small colleges, and decreasing number of international students. Serrano responded that his office worked very closely with the Provost, the VP for Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management to lay out projections that are consistent with the Office of

Institutional Research's data. He noted his assumption was that those same discussions were happening organically within each school and division.

The next question was a two-part question: the first was whether interest from our endowment was ever used to augment our campus-based resources; the second whether fundraising appeals could include donations into something that produced dividend income for CSI, and not just for scholarships. Serrano responded that CSI did not use foundation resources to balance the books. Those resources were invested in students through scholarships and specific initiatives.

The last question sought whether there had been any movement by the University to adjust the way that it determined space allocations. Serrano responded that he had not been party to those discussions, or aware of any conversations on that topic.

VII. Reports of the committees of the College Council

a. Committee on Organization – Warrick Bell

Warrick Bell, Chair of the Committee on Organization, began his report by stating that a third notice for the University Faculty Senate (UFS) had been sent via email. He reported that the seats of all the full-time faculty members of the UFS were expiring, and to date there were still two vacancies.

With regards to the CSI Faculty Senate, there were several vacancies for delegates-at-large, with only one nomination received, to date. There are seven more vacancies, including: Faculty Senate Research Committee (2 vacancies); Faculty Senate Admissions Committee (1 vacancy); Academic Technology Committee (2 vacancies); Faculty Senate Academic Facilities Committee (1 vacancy); and CLT representatives to the Faculty Senate (1 vacancy).

For the College Council, there were also several vacancies: Administrative Review and Evaluation Committee (AREC) (3 vacancies), Association Board of Directors (3 vacancies); Auxiliary Services Corporation Board of Directors (2 vacancies). Vacancies for the HEO Steering Committee. He mentioned that nominations for adjuncts for Faculty Senate and College Council had been filled; however, there would be elections if more nominations were received. He urged everyone to pay attention to incoming emails regarding nominations and election for these committees.

Chair Gold urged members to think about serving on these committees. In particular, he urged department chairs, former department chairs, and veteran faculty members to nominate themselves for the UFS. He also asked members to think about colleagues, or someone who had joined the college in the last five years or so, who might benefit from serving on one of these committees.

b. By-Laws Committee – No report

c. Administrative Review and Evaluation Committee – No report

d. Institutional Planning Committee – President Lynch

President Lynch mentioned that the IPC met earlier this month to discuss the implementation of the strategic plan. A follow up meeting was scheduled for May 15, 2026

e. **Budget Committee** – No report

f. **Facilities Committee** – No report

VIII. **Student Government Report** – Rhoda Wilson

Rhoda Wilson, Vice President of Student Government Association (SGA), delivered the Student Government report. Highlights included:

- SGA finally has a new Office Assistant, Lisa Caruso-Colon.
- SGA had drafted a letter for the MTA which had three may concerns, written in partnership with NYPIRG, Vice President Gordon’s Office, the President's Office, Professor Peters, and Vice President Wallace:
 - Request for a bus line from Eltingville over to Marines Harbor, that would pass through the college to service those areas;
 - Request to extend the S93 bus service to late evenings and week weekends; and
 - Request to extend the S62 bus route to enter the campus and service students.
- An email with this information would shortly be sent to the whole campus community, requesting signatures in support of the letter.
- Fin Fest was a success. She extended special thanks to President Lynch and Chief Financial Officer Serrano for being in the dunk tank, which raised over \$100 for the food pantry. Fin fest also included Club Feud, Bloom Fest, and Condom Casino.
- During Election Week, SGA held debates for those who were running for the offices of Vice President and President of the SGA.
- *The Flip Side*, the SGA’s podcast, now had two new episodes that were available on the CSI’s YouTube channel.
- In closing, on behalf of the Student Government, she thanked all who attended or donated to the worthy cause of the Spring Gala. She mentioned that she was graduating this Spring but would continue to be engaged with CSI as an alumni.

The College Council members gave Rhoda Wilson a round of applause. Chair Gold asked Rhoda to convey the College Council’s congratulations to Ashley Villalva for her Dolphin Award.

IX. **HEO Steering Committee** – Tara Mastrorilli

Good Afternoon! The HEO Steering Committee met on Monday, April 28 and had our semesterly meeting with the President and members of the cabinet the following day.

During our meeting with the President, we acknowledged the success of the first Professional Development week in January and asked that the administration continue to support this event for HEOs and all faculty and staff. The President agreed and heard our request to be more involved in planning.

We also received updates and discussed HEO concerns that were reported - related to Human Resources, Facilities, and the Business Office. Of particular note,

- The HEO Handbook is being finalized by HR and should be posted on the website shortly.
- We are waiting for notification from CUNY Central confirming Summer Hours.
- We received updates on recent facilities concerns and spoke about planning for future elevator repairs in the academic buildings.
- We requested additional training and resources on the CSI procurement process. Many HEOs have reported that the process is often time arduous and unclear - not knowing what vendors to use or proper forms to fill out. Having additional training would help improve the efficiency of the process.
 - o Carlos reminded us about the Business Office General Guidelines document. And we agreed to review and provide feedback.
- Lastly, the nomination period for HEO positions on College Council is now open and closes on May 15. We encourage all HEOs to consider participating – self-nominations are welcome.

Our next meeting and last for the semester is on Monday, May 18 at 12pm. We encourage all HEOs to attend. The zoom link is on the College Council HEOSC website and we will send an email reminder once it is closer to the date.

X. Auxiliary Services Corporation Report – No report

XI. Old Business -None

XII. New Business - None

Meeting was adjourned at 4:25pm

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