

September 16, 2022

Colleagues:

It's been another eventful, and busy week. On Monday, I and members of our Office of Continuing Education and Workforce Development met with Congressperson Nicole Malliotakis and Ashlee Stephenson, from the United States Chamber of Commerce. We discussed—inter alia—the road to recovery from COVID-19 and the role that higher education must play in that process. Working with our partners in the local Staten Island community, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Staten Island Economic Development Corporation, and the Small Business Development Center, we can add to the local economy and revitalize our connections with the borough we call home. Connections with industry—either through internships and apprenticeships, or through partnerships around things like climate change and green energy—similarly guarantee that our academic offerings are relevant and desirable. It was an interesting and thought-provoking conversation, and I look forward to further engagement around these issues.

The week continued with the usual meetings and briefings, including a conversation with the Senior College Presidents where we discussed relations with the CUNY Research Foundation, and a full-day retreat at CUNY Central to discuss the nascent strategic plan and road-mapping processes. We discussed how the Chancellery can support the individual campuses and how the various schools can collaborate (the term “co-opetition” was used) to address enrollment declines, share services, and leverage the power of our system to the benefit of all (but especially our students). Speaking of students, VP Hodge and I had the opportunity to meet with the first group of student stakeholders—from WSIA—as part of a monthly “Pizza with the President” forum. The students were wonderful in sharing their impression of CSI and making recommendations for improvement in our operations. I look forward to similar gatherings with other affinity groups in the coming academic year.

Mid-September brings with it the start of Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs from September 15 to October 15 (this coincides with the official date of independence for many of the South American republics, and the commemoration concludes with both Columbus/Indigenous Persons Day/Día de la Raza). As a federally-designated Hispanic Serving Institution, CSI—like many of its CUNY counterparts—benefits from the rich diversity and contributions of the Latinx community, and I look forward to the activities, events, and programming that our Office of Pluralism and Diversity has planned. I am proud to serve a campus and a system that is committed to making sure that all feel welcome and appreciated.

The week concludes with the signature event of the “Year of Willowbrook” on Saturday morning. Joined by elected officials, members of the CUNY leadership (including Board of Trustee members and representatives from the chancellery and those who were instrumental in the fight for disability rights, we will officially “cut the ribbon” and open the Willowbrook Mile, an accessible trail that marks the history of the Willowbrook State School, the advocacy that led to its closure, and the impact that this institution has had on the local community. The legacy of place is an important feature of CSI and the fact that we embrace our history is compelling. I want to personally and publicly commend the work of the Willowbrook Legacy Committee,

which has worked tirelessly for many months to see this event-and others throughout the year-come to fruition, and to acknowledge the hard work of our dedicated Facilities and Buildings and Grounds teams who made their vision a reality. I hope that you will all take time to walk the Willowbrook Mile, to reflect on what it means to work in a space such as this, and to strive for equity and justice in our daily interactions.

Until next time,



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