

February 28, 2013

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE COLLEGE COUNCIL

On February 25, the College of Staten Island was honored to welcome Governor Andrew Cuomo as he presented his State of the State address to a standing-room-only audience in the Williamson Theatre. The Black Box Theatre, which provided a live televised broadcast of the event, was also filled to capacity. Although we received very short notice of the visit, an estimated 600 faculty, staff, students, community leaders, and local and state legislative representatives attended the event.

The Governor's presence served to yet again underscore the College's importance and value, not only as the sole public institution of higher education on Staten Island, but also because of our truly unique campus.

In my welcoming remarks, I mentioned that Andrew's father, Mario Cuomo, once praised our 204-acre campus as the most beautiful and spacious of the CUNY campuses. And in his State of the State address, Governor Andrew Cuomo, like his father before him, proclaimed that the College of Staten Island is a "jewel of the CUNY system." In response, I quipped, "Who am I to argue with two New York Governors, especially when they are right."

I should mention that New York State Senator Diane Savino also expressed the same sentiment about the College when I recently appeared before the New York State Senate Bipartisan Task Force on Hurricane Sandy to give testimony on storm surge research.

The Governor's visit further allowed us to spotlight the planned construction of the College's new 175,000-square-foot CUNY Interdisciplinary High-Performance Computing Center (IHGCC), which will be the first new academic facility brought to this campus since its inception.

Student Katherine Brigandi, an Accounting, Finance, and Economics major who had the honor of introducing the Governor, spoke of her important work as a research assistant for the IHGCC's Social Policy Simulation Center. Using a geographic information systems program and data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Katherine is accessing our supercomputers to create damage assessment maps that will assist in the planning for rebuilding and recovery in the most vulnerable areas of Staten Island following Superstorm Sandy.

In fact, it is our understanding that the Governor's visit was initiated by the College's interdisciplinary leadership efforts (social science, political science, earth and environmental science, among others) concerning the recovery and future of Staten Island.

In December, we engaged a group called Vision for Staten Island, comprised of community leaders from the business, philanthropic, and education sectors, to discuss the College's role in Staten Island's future. From this meeting, the concept of our March 8 event, Superstorm Sandy Forum: A Serious Conversation about the Future of Staten Island, was born.

As mentioned earlier, in January, I appeared before the New York State Senate Bipartisan Task Force on Hurricane Sandy, co-chaired by State Senators Andrew Lanza and Malcolm Smith, to provide testimony on our storm surge research.

In early February, the College held its annual legislative forum, attended by local and state legislators as well as members of the Chancellor's Office, during which we directly espoused the capabilities of the IHPCC in improving lives and communities in New York as well as supporting the cutting-edge research conducted by our faculty.

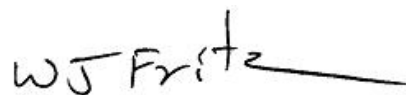
The effects of these efforts are twofold. First, they have placed CSI as a local, regional, and national leader in the discussion of sustainable land use and disaster recovery. Second, they have provided us with an opportunity to advocate for funding for the construction of our IHPCC. CUNY has designated the IHPCC as one of only five senior college projects listed on the University's Gold Sheet setting forth its 2013-2014 state budget priorities.

At the end of February, I traveled to Albany and, along with CUNY's senior government relations staff and several of my staff, met with our state representatives as well as representatives from the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee to advocate for the IHPCC and our other capital projects. While nothing is certain in this economic climate, I believe that we have an excellent possibility of breaking ground for construction of the IHPCC during the summer of 2014.

All of this is consistent with one of my stated priorities as Interim President, which is to generate more internal and external resources, new space/construction, and increased recognition to our campus, consistent with the College's Mission, Vision, and Values.

On a related note, I recently sent an email to the College community announcing that, following a nationwide search and extensive campus participation, Dr. Kenneth Boyden has been appointed as the new Vice President for Institutional Advancement and External Affairs at the College of Staten Island, effective February 5, 2013. I would like to commend the outstanding work of the search committee chaired by Ira Persky, Vice President for Finance and Administration. The committee's diligence and hard work produced an impressive pool of applicants, ensuring the success of this important search.

In closing, let me wish everyone a successful spring semester. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "WJ Fritz" followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

William J. Fritz, PhD