

March 21, 2013

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE COLLEGE COUNCIL

I would like begin my report with a few timely quotes, the first from English poet and writer John Masefield, who observed that *“There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university, a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see.”*

The other quote is from British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead who said, “The task of a university is the creation of the future, so far as rational thought and civilized modes of appreciation can affect the issue.”

Taken together, Masefield and Whitehead speak of a university as a place where serious and sometimes difficult conversations take place to discern truth for the benefit of our future.

In this vein, I am very pleased to remark on the tremendous success of our Superstorm Sandy Forum: A Serious Conversation About the Future of Staten Island, which was held on March 8 in the Center for the Arts with close to 300 attendees.

Featuring expert panels on the geology and history of storm surges on Staten Island, sustainable land use in flood-prone areas, the human impact of natural disasters from a social science perspective, and the role of government and finance in Superstorm Sandy recovery, the College’s interdisciplinary approach to the serious conversation about the future of Staten Island was on full display for those, as Alfred North Whitehead would say, whose “rational thought and civilized modes of appreciation” can affect the future.

A familiar refrain often used to describe the College is that we are a world-class institution. Indeed, following Superstorm Sandy and led by the College’s renowned faculty—Katie Cumiskey, Jay Arena, Lacey Sloan, Richard Flanagan, Alan Benimoff, Nan Sussman, and Michael Kress, to name but a few—the College of Staten Island has had local, regional, national, and international impact.

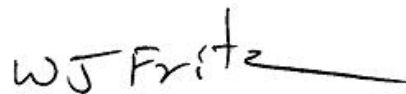
On March 4, the College and CSI faculty hosted a research team from Japan comprised of professors from Kyoto and Niigata universities, along with government officials from the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism; the Crisis and Environment Management Policy Institute; and the Infrastructure Development Institute. The visiting team members, many of whom are still dealing with the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami, were specifically interested in learning about our interdisciplinary and intergovernmental approach to disaster recovery.

I think all of us, both the CSI and Japanese representatives, were particularly struck by the similarity of issues and challenges faced by both our countries in taking the necessary steps to prepare for future occurrences of these natural disasters, and I am optimistic that this initial meeting may lead to future collaborations between and among our institutions.

In closing, I want to remind everyone that our annual Celestial Ball, which was postponed due to Superstorm Sandy, will be held on Saturday, April 13 at the Richmond Country Club. This important event will raise much-needed funds to benefit all aspects of the College, including student and faculty support. This year, the Celestial Ball will also be honoring Robert Cutrona, Sr., President of Project-One Services; Norma D'Arrigo, Community Leader; and Dr. Alfred Levine, Professor of Engineering Science and Physics, and Director of the Center for Environmental Science.

Tickets for the Celestial Ball can be purchased through the College's Advancement Office, and I certainly encourage everyone to attend to support our students and faculty.

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