

October 17, 2013

President's Report to the College Council

The College Council did not meet in September, so allow me to wish everyone a belated happy new academic year.

Our summer recently culminated on a very high note with the opening of our first-ever residence halls. On August 25, well over 400 students from across the state, around the nation, and from other countries moved into Dolphin Cove. Bonnie and I had a wonderful time welcoming and making waffles for the students and their families. It was very exciting to personally hear why many students and families chose to come to the College of Staten Island.

The success of this day was not without its challenges. At last year's College Convocation, I spoke about the Norwegian Renaissance Viking Fridtjof Nansen, relating his spirit of exploration to the intellectual dynamism of higher education. You may recall that Nansen attempted to reach the North Pole in 1893, a challenge many considered impossible at the time. He developed and implemented a strategy to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, utilizing new and innovative technology, while reevaluating and adapting his goals when he had to do so. I stated at the time that this was, in many ways, CSI's model for success as well.

I can safely say that if we were to create a Fridtjof Nansen Award at CSI, its first recipient would be Vice President for Finance and Administration Ira Persky. I surmise that many of you have at one time built an addition or remodeled a room in your home and have personally experienced the challenge of working with contractors, subcontractors, architects, and building inspectors. Now multiply that experience by the 133 residence apartments that had to be completed by move-in day, in the face of multiple obstacles that were largely out the College's control, and you can appreciate that this was our version of the North Pole.

But unlike Nansen who actually failed in his ultimate quest to reach the pole, under Vice President Persky's leadership, and with the dedicated assistance of countless others, we reached our destination

on August 25. I would like to take a moment to recognize Ira both individually and as a proxy for the entire CSI team who helped make this happen.

As I contemplated the significance of this event, I was reminded of a quote from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*. With his kingdom about to engage in the battle of Helms Deep, one of the greatest conflicts of his reign, King Théoden, in a seminal moment of clarity, states simply - "so it begins."

And indeed so begins a new era for the College of Staten Island, from solely a commuter institution to now a residential community of learners—where student diversity will flourish and thrive, where student engagement will increase in all facets of campus life, and where more of the highest-achieving high school students will choose to live, study, and succeed.

Many of us have already noticed small changes taking place. At the College Council Executive Committee meeting last month, the Provost shared that Student Government representatives had advised him that initial interest and participation in the group has already increased significantly due, in large part, to our resident students. Other faculty at the meeting mentioned that more and more students can be seen sitting and socializing in previously unused areas of campus. These seemingly minor anecdotes portend the beginning of a much larger institutional transformation.

Less than 24 hours after the move-in, the College held its Inaugural Freshmen Convocation on the Great Lawn where, for the first time, more than 1,500 students from our entering class were formally inducted into our academic community. As one faculty member emailed me, this was especially significant because the initiative addressed a gap in our freshman-year experience. Much like our residence halls, Freshman Convocation will go a long way in creating a real student academic community enhancing their college experience and advancing persistence and academic success.

Many of you are aware that the Governor recently created the NY-CUNY 2020 Challenge Grant Program, a joint initiative between the Governor and CUNY. The goal of CUNY 2020 is to incentivize long-term economic development implementation plans, driven by CUNY campuses in areas of their academic strengths. The CUNY 2020 program will provide a total of \$55 million in capital funding and is a competitive process open to all CUNY senior colleges, graduate and professional schools, and community colleges.

CSI has prepared a very competitive proposal in collaboration with five other CUNY campuses—The Graduate Center, Borough of Manhattan Community College, The City College of New York, The New York City College of Technology, and the School for Professional Studies. Our proposal leverages a capital investment of \$19.5 million over two years with the new School of Business taking the lead to create multiple big data business analytics resource sites throughout the city.

If funded, CUNY 2020 will provide training for graduate students and business professionals to meet the current industry demand for big data analysts in the public and private sectors. Over a five-year period, the CUNY consortium project activities will yield an economic impact of approximately \$26.3 million in wages and \$8.7 million in tax revenue, and create approximately 154 construction jobs in the City.

In September, we invited Senator Diane Savino and Assemblyman Michael Cusick to campus to seek their support for our proposal and to also tour our facilities. We presented the 2M building as the eventual home for the new School of Business with construction occurring in multiple phases starting with ten classrooms and two offices later this year. The CUNY 2020 funds would provide for renovation of an additional area of 2M for big data analytics. We emphasized that our use of the computers is very interdisciplinary, something that is unique in higher education.

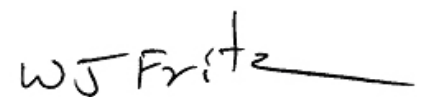
The renovations in 2M will support our business and economics research initiatives, while the new Interdisciplinary High-Performance Computing Center will support our science and math research initiatives. These projects, along with the anticipated move of Continuing Education off campus, will help address our space-limitation issues for all faculty and staff. This is just one of many capital projects underway at CSI.

The big picture is that people are seeing that the College is an institution worthy of investment. They saw that last year we were named by Washington Monthly magazine as one of “America’s Best-Bang-for-the-Buck Colleges”. And they see that just recently CSI was, for the first time, named one of America’s Best Northeast Public Colleges by U.S. News & World Report.

At our annual Convocation on October 24, I will be announcing the official kick-off of the Campaign for CSI with the goal of raising \$20 million by 2016, 25% of this funding to be allocated for faculty support, 33% for student support, 25% for capital needs, and 17% for endowment growth. We have already raised approximately \$7 million during the silent phase of the campaign, which began in 2008-2009, and we are ready to meet the challenge of reaching our \$20 million target by 2016.

In closing, let me say, once again, happy new academic year, and I wish all of our students, faculty, and staff great success.

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