

**President's Commencement Remarks
May 30, 2013**

Good Morning.

Family, friends, faculty, staff, and distinguished guests, I welcome you to the 37th Commencement of the College of Staten Island.

And to the graduating Class of 2013, you made it. Congratulations!

Since New York has been rainy and quite miserable recently, we put in a special order for cool and sunny weather today. Unfortunately, they only got it half right.

As I was preparing for my remarks today, I was reminded of cartoonist Gary Trudeau, known for his *Doonesbury* cartoon strip, who once claimed that long commencement speeches "were invented largely in the belief that outgoing college students should never be released into the world until they have been properly sedated." So at the risk of disappointing a few of you in the audience today, I am informing you that I made an executive decision to reduce my planned three-hour speech to a few minutes.

John F. Kennedy once said that "the courage of life is often a less dramatic spectacle than the courage of a final moment, but it is no less a magnificent mixture of triumph and tragedy." I think these words ring particularly true for all of us here today.

A mere seven months ago, we experienced one of life's great tragedies when Superstorm Sandy brought incredible devastation to Staten Island, devastation from which many in our community still have not fully recovered. But from tragedy came the triumph of an incredible expression of humanity, as you, the students, faculty, and staff of the College, volunteered with local service providers and community organizations to help those in their greatest time of need.

And today, we celebrate another one of life's great triumphs, the attainment of your degree, pursued and accomplished in the face of significant personal challenges, obstacles, and demands. Your determination and resilience inspire all of us, and on behalf of the College and the Staten Island community, we applaud you.

Be proud of the fact that you received your degree from the College of Staten Island.

Just look around you. How many colleges and universities in New York City can boast about having a beautiful, sprawling 204 acre campus? The answer is none, except CSI.

How many colleges and universities in New York City can rightly assert that they are the only public institution of higher learning in their borough? The answer is again none, except CSI.

How many colleges and universities in the region have an Interdisciplinary High-

Performance Computing Center housing one of the most powerful computing systems in the region, utilized by faculty and students working side-by-side across academic disciplines in the humanities social sciences, as well as the sciences to support their research and scholarship? None, except CSI.

And which college or university in New York City has arguably the strongest bond with its community and its people? You know my answer to this, it's CSI.

These are just some of the things that make the College of Staten Island unique and, in turn, make our graduates equally unique and special to the world.

And we are evolving as an even greater institution.

If you look to the right of Building 2A, you can see beyond the trees to Dolphin Cove, our new student residence halls opening in August. When we broke ground for construction last year we knew there would be some interest by students to live on campus, but we didn't know exactly how much interest. That remained to be seen. As of this morning, we have received over 518 applications with full deposits for 454 beds, a remarkable success that leads me to wonder if Bonnie and I should start getting the guestroom in our home ready for the overflow of students.

These students are coming not only from areas we currently serve but from many new places where we have never received applications. As expected, we are seeing an increase in numbers from all of the other boroughs, including the Bronx, but we are also seeing students coming from non-traditional areas like Buffalo, Albany, New Paltz, several Westchester and Rockland county towns, and communities on Long Island. Out of state, students are coming from California, Texas, Montana, Massachusetts, Maine, and Connecticut; and internationally, from Greece, France, Japan, Australia, and the Netherlands.

CUNY and CSI are investing in our campus to fulfill the expectations of our exciting Master Plan. Thanks to the support of our legislative representatives, the CUNY Board of Trustees, the Chancellor, and Vice Chancellor Iris Weinshall, who is honoring us with her presence here today, we will soon be breaking ground for a new Interdisciplinary High-Performance Computing Center that will be constructed between Building 2A and the Center for the Arts. The Computing Center will not only be the new home of our supercomputers, but will also provide 100,000 square feet of classrooms and office space.

Congruent with our Strategic Plan, we have just created a School of Business and a School of Education, the first professional schools at CSI. A new school for health-related disciplines will be forthcoming. The creation of these new schools will support faculty scholarship, promote collaborative partnerships within our community, and will better position the College within the broader academic community to provide enhanced value for our students.

The College of Staten Island reached another academic milestone this year when the

Governor designated CSI as a doctoral-degree-granting institution. When the first Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy cohort enrolls at the College, students will be able to study and receive their degrees solely from CSI. The College will be able to grant doctoral degrees not only in Physical Therapy but in other fields as well.

The College of Staten Island was, is, and always will be a place where you can pursue all of your ambitions and achieve all of your dreams. With a degree from CSI, you can accomplish anything, just like two notable alumni who reconnected with CSI this year.

Dr. Jerod Loeb, Class of 1971, Executive Vice President of the Joint Commission, one of the most prominent medical organizations that accredits and certifies more than 20,000 health organizations and programs in the United States, returned to CSI this spring as our first-ever Alumni Fellow. And Thomas Chin, Class of 1980, JPMorgan Chase Vice President of Latin America and Canada Infrastructure Operations, returned to CSI to speak at our induction ceremony of the Phi Beta Delta International Scholars Honors Society. Today, as graduates, you will join Dr. Loeb and Mr. Chin and 60,000 other CSI living alumni.

There are those who view colleges and universities metaphorically as living entities with the alumni forming the soul of the institution. I subscribe to this notion as well. As alumni, your achievements become our achievements. Your prominence builds upon our standing and prestige. Your philanthropy and humanity become our contribution in kind to a better, more compassionate and caring world.

Never forget this inseparable bond that you have with CSI, and always remember that should you need us, our faculty and staff who helped you reach this milestone in your lives will always be here for you.

In closing, let me quote poet, author, and philosopher Henry David Thoreau who wrote: *“I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected”* I know that each of you will go confidently and you will meet with successes both expected and unexpected. When you do, please remember the important role that the College of Staten Island and The City University of New York played in shaping your lives.

Thank you, and again congratulations Class of 2013.

William J. Fritz, PhD
Interim President