



April 24, 2014

President's April Report to the College Council

Good afternoon.

Pursuant to the NY Rising Community Reconstruction program, Staten Island was previously allocated \$25 million to fund projects in the borough for post-Superstorm Sandy recovery, which include education programs and a “Go to High Ground” signage initiative spearheaded by the College of Staten Island. Yesterday, I traveled to Albany to participate in a meeting as a member of Governor Cuomo’s NY Rising Community Reconstruction Taskforce where we learned that Staten Island was awarded an additional \$3 million in funding.

Many CSI faculty and staff contributed to the work of the Taskforce. I want to especially acknowledge the contributions of Professor Cynthia Scarinci. Her work on small/medium-size businesses in terms of risk recovery and disasters was integral to the Taskforce’s final report. In addition, the support provided by an interdisciplinary team from CSI—Professors Alan Benimoff, Lacey Sloan, Ashley Dawson, Jonathan Peters, Richard Flanagan, and Katie Cumiskey; faculty from the departments of nursing and psychology; and, of course, Michael Kress, Vice President for Information Technology and Economic Development, and his team—provided valuable guidance concerning the committee’s final recommendations.

In my March report to the College Council, I provided an update concerning the College’s lobbying efforts in seeking funding support from our local and state representatives for our capital projects. Fewer than two weeks after my report, Governor Cuomo and the legislature announced passage of the 2014-2015 state budget.

I am very pleased to announce that with the bipartisan support of our Staten Island delegation of the State Legislature in the forefront, the 2014-2015 budget includes \$10 million for the design and bidding phases for the new Interdisciplinary High-Performance Computing Center (IHPCC). I also understand that Governor Cuomo was directly involved in the funding allocation decision. In light of this remarkable development, I think that it is

important to talk about how the new building will impact the College of Staten Island and the Staten Island community.

On one level, this means that CUNY and the State of New York are committed to building the IHPCC, for which we anticipate breaking ground in 2016. The IHPCC will become the first new academic building constructed at the College of Staten Island since the establishment of the Willowbrook campus in 1993.

On another level, the IHPCC should be viewed as something more encompassing. As Danish architect Bjarke Ingels once said about the meaning of design and construction, in the big picture, it is “the art and science of making sure our cities and buildings fit with the way we want to live our lives.” In a very real sense, what we build is an expression of how we, as a campus community, want to live our academic lives at CSI.

In 2011, the faculty, staff, and students, through many town hall meetings, committee meetings, and focus groups, set our desired direction through our comprehensive Strategic Plan, *Many Voices, One Vision*. The first words of the College’s Mission, as set forth in the Strategic Plan, provide, “Grounded in the Liberal Arts tradition, the College of Staten Island is committed to the highest standards of teaching, research, and scholarship.”

The value of our IHPCC emanates from a unique interdisciplinary approach—bringing together the work and perspectives of scientists, social scientists, and humanists, along with faculty in Business, the Health Sciences, and Education—that is “Grounded in the Liberal Arts tradition.” I have used other high-performance computational centers in my own research, and none are structured the way that our Center is used at CSI.

In order to advance other aspects of our Mission, most notably teaching, research, and scholarship for all faculty, we have an immediate need for more space—for classrooms, for offices, and for labs. Our campus was originally designed for 7,500 students; we now have nearly twice that number. The IHPCC, with its anticipated 100,000 square feet of new, usable academic space, is one answer to this interdisciplinary need. As some academic departments move into the IHPCC, vacated areas will create new available space on campus. Because it is imperative that we decide as soon as possible how this vacated space will be used, I have asked Ira Persky, Vice President for Finance and Administration, to reconvene our campus master planning group to revisit all of the critical issues.

The Interdisciplinary High-Performance Computing Center is also playing a significant part in realizing our Vision for CSI to “become an even more vibrant center of intellectual and cultural exchange” on Staten Island. As quoted in the *Staten Island Advance* regarding the \$10 million in funding, Senator Andrew Lanza predicted that the IHPCC “will make CSI an even bigger attraction.” Assemblyman Michael Cusick added that, “This shows that CSI is the jewel we’ve always known it to be.” In another article appearing this week, Borough President James Oddo commented that “the rising profile of the College of Staten Island—and its supercomputing center—will probably have a bigger impact” than any other project in attracting businesses and high-tech to the borough.

These perceptions are helping CSI to “achieve greater regional, national, and international recognition.” *Business Insider*, the prominent business and technology news Website, recently released its list of the top schools in the country with great academics and high acceptance rates that challenge the myth that a college is necessarily better if it is more difficult to gain entrance. Only one school per state was chosen, and for New York that school was the College of Staten Island.

Some of the other prominent schools named include the University of North Carolina, University of Pittsburgh, University of Maryland, West Virginia University, American University, University of Connecticut, University of Delaware, Washington State University, University of Montana, Seton Hall University, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, and the University of North Georgia. I am familiar with all of the other 49 institutions on the list, and we have been placed with some very prestigious company.

This honor follows CSI being named in 2013 for the first time as one of America’s Best Colleges in the North by *U.S. News & World Report*, and our recognition in 2012 as one of “America’s Best-Bang-for-the-Buck Colleges” by *Washington Monthly* magazine.

Recognition leads to confidence by others in our academic mission, which translates into the confidence to invest in resources for faculty and students to “enhance the quality of [our] student-centered programs, research, scholarship, and creative works.”

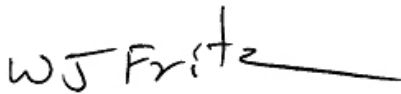
Philanthropist and businessman W. Clement Stone said, “When you discover your mission, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it.” The IHPCC is one of the many

initiatives we have undertaken since 2011 to get to work on our Mission—our new residence halls; new undergraduate and graduate courses, majors, and degrees; new schools and academic departments; the hiring of new faculty; new student orientation initiative; NY-CUNY 2020 Challenge Grant; START-UP NY program; and the 2M building renovation—all while remaining “Grounded in the Liberal Arts tradition.”

My personal vision for the College of Staten Island is also the vision of our Strategic Plan, developed through two years of faculty, staff, and student discussion—that we continue on our current trajectory, that we remain grounded in the liberal arts and sciences tradition, and that we take our rightful place with all of the prestigious institutions such as those on the *Business Insider* list no matter which criteria are used for the ranking.

In closing, let me wish everyone a productive spring semester as we quickly approach the conclusion to another great academic year at the College of Staten Island.

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