



December 17, 2015

President's Report to the College Council

Good afternoon.

I want to begin my report today by reflecting briefly on two recent major events at the College, our annual College Convocation, held in November, and our annual Celestial Ball which took place this past weekend.

I am pleased to announce that this year's Celestial Ball was our most successful to date, setting records in both attendance and net proceeds, which totaled approximately \$100,000. If you recall at the last College Council meeting, I advised that the CSI Foundation recently allocated \$100,000 to academic departments. Because this departmental support is funded through proceeds from the Celestial Ball, the success of this event directly supports our faculty. So let me thank all of you who were in attendance and advanced the academic mission of the College.

Last year at Convocation, we celebrated our humble beginnings as Staten Island Community College in 1956 at 50 Bay Street in St. George, the first public institution of higher education in the borough; to the establishment of Richmond College in 1967 at 130 Stuyvesant Place, an innovative and experimental upper-divisional college, one of the first of its kind in the nation; to the merger of institutions in 1976 creating the College of Staten Island at our Sunnyside campus; to our current home in 1993.

While we looked at our College legacy last year, this year, we looked at our legacy of place, specifically our important connection to this Willowbrook campus. As anthropologist Keith Basso posited in his book *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, places act as mnemonic devices for people to remember important cultural moments and the social lessons that originated from those moments in those places.

Our Willowbrook campus is such a place, from its origin as bucolic farmland; as the site of Halloran General Hospital, one of the greatest military medical facilities in the nation during World War II; then as the home of the infamous Willowbrook State School; to where the College of Staten Island is today.

While the horrors of the State School are well documented - the overcrowding, neglect, and harm inflicted upon people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through institutionalization - less known is the fact that the Willowbrook State School is also a story of remarkable triumph that changed the course of history.

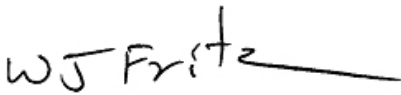
The tireless work of activists and advocates, those who relentlessly fought the system, led Hugh Carey, in one of his first acts as Governor of New York, to sign the landmark Willowbrook Consent Decree in 1975, which not only resulted in the eventual closing of the Willowbrook State School in 1987, but also marked the beginning of the end of the systematic warehousing of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all of New York State and then across the nation.

The heightened awareness brought about by the Willowbrook State School is also credited with sparking the adoption of the first federal civil rights laws protecting people with disabilities, becoming the earliest building blocks of legislation leading to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Think about it, this Willowbrook campus, this place where we teach, learn and work, gave rise to one of the most important civil rights acts in the history of this nation and the world.

Our legacies form the pillars of our noble Mission, strengthening the foundation of our College from which we reach forward and ascend.

As I stated in my holiday message to the College community, now is the time to reflect upon our cherished memories with our families, friends, and campus colleagues, as we prepare for our future together.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "WJ Fritz" followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line.

William J. Fritz, PhD
President

