

President's Report to the College Council

Good afternoon.

While there is much to discuss concerning the successes of our recent Celestial Ball and our College Convocation, I will defer my report on these items until our next meeting of the College Council to discuss a more pressing and important matter.

As you may be aware, I have sent several messages to the campus community in response to the intense uncertainty and vulnerability expressed by many across our nation, including our own students, faculty and staff, following the presidential election. Following my announcements, some members of our community have sought guidance concerning what the College can do to protect and support our undocumented students.

Yesterday, the Chancellor released a statement concerning the University's commitment in this regard, stating unequivocally that: "CUNY will take any steps available under the law to protect and support its undocumented students." Specifically, the Chancellor pledged as follows:

- CUNY will take no action to assist in the enforcement of the immigration laws except as required by law;
- CUNY will protect student record information in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act;
- CUNY will not turn over student information to immigration enforcement authorities except pursuant to court order;
- CUNY will not request or gather information about students' citizenship or immigration status in the course of providing education or other services or in connection with public safety activities except as required in connection with tuition or financial aid eligibility;
- CUNY will not permit immigration enforcement officials to enter its campuses except to the extent required by a warrant or court order; and
- CUNY will work with city, state, and federal leaders in support of immigration reforms that maximize, not diminish, educational opportunities for all students.

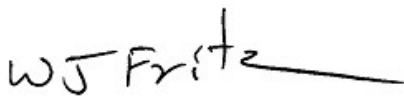
Much care and consultation was taken by the Chancellor in preparing his statement, and on behalf of the College of Staten Island, I am making this same pledge to our students. Furthermore, I am making this same pledge to our faculty and staff, who may be similarly situated, to take any steps available under the law to protect and support them. To do anything less would undermine the very foundation of CSI's Mission, which states: "We embrace the strength of our diversity."

There have been discussions nationally about whether colleges and universities should be designated as Sanctuary Campuses. While I have a deep and career-long commitment to undocumented students, it would not be responsible for CSI to self-designate as a Sanctuary Campus because 1) the term is ill-defined and subject to different interpretations, and 2) such designation may raise expectations of protections that neither CUNY nor the College can legally guarantee. I have come to the conclusion, as have many other higher education institutions across the country, that self-designation at the present time could potentially result in more harm to students than good.

On a related note, I have received several requests from our College community to sign a national statement calling for the continuation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program. I will do so later this afternoon.

As I have previously stated, institutions of higher education should be the center for serious conversations on difficult topics as this lies at the very core of academic freedom. The College will continue to support the free exchange of ideas and differing viewpoints. I have confidence that we can learn from each other as we strive to understand the complicated issues before us and move forward together. To reiterate, CSI is a great place, and will remain a great place, to live, learn, and work.

I wish you a happy and peaceful holiday season.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "WJ Fritz" followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

William J. Fritz, PhD
President

