

September 15, 2016

President's Report to the College Council

Good afternoon.

Although I have already spoken to many of you since the start of classes, allow me to again welcome everyone back.

In my welcome message to the College community, I referred to a quote by Scottish poet Thomas Campbell who spoke of an "*Audacious hope*." This is the optimism, albeit somewhat more cautious than Thomas Campbell, that I bring to the new academic year.

It has been an auspicious beginning, marked by the long-awaited settlement of faculty and staff collective bargaining agreements, and I applaud all of the efforts by the parties involved for this accomplishment. Additionally, *Washington Monthly's* 2016 list of "America's Best-Bang-for-the-Buck Colleges" ranked the College of Staten Island 18th out of 386 schools in the Northeast. The primary criteria for *Washington Monthly's* rankings are alumni salary potential, low student loan debt, and a deep commitment to enrolling and graduating first-generation students, which are all hallmarks of CSI. I congratulate and thank the faculty, staff, and students who continue to advance the reputation and prestige of the College to new heights.

I recently announced that I have recommended to the CUNY Board of Trustees that Ken Iwama serve as the College's Vice President for Economic Development, Continuing Studies, and Government Relations. This is a critical appointment given the budgetary challenges ahead, which I will discuss shortly. The reporting units within this Division have already contributed significantly to the resource needs of faculty and students. Through our Government Relations efforts, we have recently received unprecedented funding for our academic departments including more than \$600k for a new television studio system for Media Culture and \$500k for a new greenhouse for Biology. Additionally, we have secured more than \$100k for equipment for the departments of Psychology and Engineering, and the School of Business. Our Office of Continuing Studies contributes more than \$200k each year to lease off-site classroom space, which has given us the equivalent of ten new classrooms/offices, providing some relief to our space constraints. Furthermore, Continuing Studies will be contributing additional funds to offset some of the impacts of the budget reductions on faculty and students. As the Division grows, it will assume an even greater role in providing an alternative source of revenue for the College, as State funding may continue to decline.

You should also be aware that the appointment of this position is actually part of the overall reorganization of my senior executive leadership, which has reduced the overall number of my Cabinet members and resulted in an annual savings of approximately \$300k.

This brings me to our biggest challenge this year – our budget, which like those of all senior campuses, has been impacted by at least four factors:

1. State budget cuts of 3% to CUNY (\$2.7M reduction to our campus) last year and 2% (\$1.8M reduction to our campus) this year;
2. CUNY's loss of State Compact Funding that had historically been used to fund new faculty lines;
3. Discontinuance of CUNY's authority to implement a "rational tuition plan," which permitted a \$300 increase per year in full-time tuition (\$2.8M loss to our campus); and
4. Revenue loss due to changes in enrollment trends. At CSI, the loss is due largely to retention issues (the numbers of new freshmen, new transfers, and graduate students continue to climb).

This combined reduction of more than \$8M will present serious challenges to the College. It is important to remember that despite these cuts, our level of faculty hiring for this year remained high, as over the past several years, which, in my view, properly reflects our academic priorities at CSI.

While we should be able to get through this year by a combination of OTPS cuts, holding positions open, and supplementing with non-tax levy resources, I am concerned about next year and beyond. Furthermore, continuing to balance the budget by attrition, salary savings, reduced professional development opportunities, and supply cuts is not an effective way to manage a campus.

As our budget becomes more challenging – and it will become even more challenging if we do not see either tuition increases or increases in State support – I will be relying heavily on the recommendations of the College Council Budget Committee concerning strategic priorities for allocations and expenditures. Specifically, I have asked that Committee to convene before the end of this month, with the Provost and the Vice President for Finance and Administration, to review the campus budget, develop recommendations, and project expenditures for the remainder of this year and next.

I am asking the Committee to consider what our priorities should be as we deal with these issues. For example, should we continue to place the hiring of new faculty as our top priority or do we invest in our aging infrastructure and/or in staffing in other critical areas? This is the type of question that I would like the Budget Committee to address.

Back in July, I notified the campus that we decided not to schedule classes at the St. George facility until after the fall semester. This was necessitated because of delays in the lease, and

the design and bidding process, none of which were caused by campus inaction. The University Board of Trustees approved the general lease terms at its meeting in January. Drawings were sent to CUNY for review and comment in late April, and University and landlord attorneys signed off on a lease agreement in May, pending approval by the Attorney General's Office and the State Comptroller's Office. Due to the speed of the process until that point, we had every reason to believe that the facility would be ready for classes this fall. However, unanticipated delays with the State Attorney General and State Comptroller's reviews required delaying the planned fall opening.

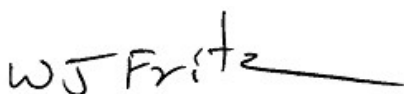
It is very important that we open CSI St. George as soon as possible and, it is hoped, by spring 2017. Because enrollment has a direct impact on the budget, I believe that it is especially important to stay with our St. George plan during this budget climate. Not only does St. George represent a way to gain additional enrollment, but it will also provide access to affordable post-secondary education for the 18,000 18 to 25 year olds on the North Shore with high school diplomas who are not currently attending any CUNY campus. It is my sincere hope that all academic departments will consider programs and course offerings that meet the needs of these students, and that you will work closely with your Deans and the representatives of Academic Affairs and Student & Enrollment Services to best support this new venture.

Finally, yesterday, the College held a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Willowbrook Mile project. For those of you who may be new to the College, the Willowbrook State School, which operated on these grounds from 1947 through 1987, came under national scrutiny for its deplorable conditions emanating from the systematic warehousing of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through institutionalization. Efforts leading to the eventual closing of Willowbrook collectively represent a seminal moment in United States history leading to greater protection of the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Willowbrook Mile involves the creation of a pathway through existing walkways around the campus and neighboring properties, marked by commemorative stations providing important information about the Willowbrook State School. In honor of the Groundbreaking Ceremony, the College has installed temporary stations throughout the Willowbrook Mile to provide the community with a glimpse of how the project will look upon completion. I hope you will take the time to visit some of the stations and reflect upon the history and legacy of the Willowbrook State School.

In closing, I wish you much success this academic year.

Thank you.



William J. Fritz, PhD
President

