



5/3/2020

To the Campus Community,

I know the financial state of CUNY, and CSI in particular, is of concern to all of us. In the various townhalls on which I have appeared, I have noted that the State enacted budget for the upcoming fiscal year contains a provision allowing further adjustments (reductions) on April 30, June 30 and a final opportunity on December 31, 2020. While Governor Cuomo recently warned that the State Budget has a projected \$13 billion gap related to the pandemic response, no further details regarding specific cuts to the CUNY budget have been provided.

I understand the anxiety and frustration caused by the uncertainty of the situation, in addition to the overarching health and safety concerns of the moment. While we have not received budget details, we have started to plan for options so we are better prepared in the event we are advised of specific cuts. Any recommendations for budget reductions will be guided by three principles – maintain quality instruction for our students, minimize cuts to staffing to the greatest extent possible, and maintain a safe and healthy campus, for the day we are able to return to normal operations. I will be consulting with the Personnel & Budget Committee, the College Council Budget Committee, and other stakeholders regarding any recommended actions.

Aside from any actions related to the financial health of the system, I know we all are concerned about what the fall semester will look like. To date, no final decision has been made and we are engaging in conversations with CUNY, our Board of Trustees, NYS Education Department, and our accrediting agencies as well as various City and State agencies as to what the fall may look like.

Regardless of when the decision is made, now is a good time to prepare for the possibility that instruction may be fully online or a hybrid model of instruction. To that end we have worked with CUNY and the School of Professional Studies to make the SPS certification course, Online Teaching Essentials, available to all faculty teaching this summer for whom this semester was their first experience working online. Additionally, our Faculty Center and IT team continue to provide guidance and support to faculty, staff, and students and will be announcing some additional workshops in the near future to improve on the great education being offered online.

While we plan and adjust to this ever-changing world, it's important to recognize some of the great work that continues despite these difficult times.

Undergraduate research has long been a signature component of our academic program at CSI. Every year we host a Conference on Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Performance where, in most years, over 400 students present their original scholarship and creative activities, covering a wide spectrum from traditional science posters to dance, composition, and debate.

This year we had to change the format, moving the conference online, but it was still a great experience. The students did a wonderful job showcasing their scholarship, with faculty members observing and asking questions. It was clear from the questions posted in the chat room that a lot of students were participating as well.

Putting on this virtual conference was a heavy lift, involving considerable effort and ingenuity from our IT team, the Office of Graduate Studies, the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, the participating students and their faculty mentors. My thanks to all who worked so diligently to offer this experience to our students.

The event truly embodied the spirit and persistence of our faculty, staff and students. I look forward to sharing clips on our webpage in the near future!

We continue to provide support for our students outside of the classroom. Our Student Emergency Relief Campaign has raised over \$23,000 to support students in need and our Food Pantry has continued to provide food to students and their families.

Valerie Tevere, Professor of Media Culture, was awarded a 2020 Guggenheim Fellowship (jointly with Angel Nevarez of the Faculty of Art, Media, and Technology at the New School University) in the field of Fine Arts. According to their Website, Tevere and Nevarez “are multidisciplinary artists whose projects and research investigate contemporary music and sound, the electromagnetic spectrum, dissent, and public fora.” Congratulations to Professor Tevere in joining the growing ranks of our nationally recognized faculty.

Significantly, Professor Gerry Milligan has advised that the Verrazzano Honors Program has the largest incoming class of students in the history of the program, nearly doubling the number of incoming students in 2018.

A number of our faculty are documenting the effects of the pandemic on our Staten Island and tri-state communities through efforts including the history department’s Coronavirus Public History Project, the School of Education’s Poetic Pandemic Project, and the Department of Social Work’s study of the effects of moving to distance education on the CSI community.

The above is just a sample of the great work happening throughout our College and makes clear to me that working together we will be handle this and any challenge that comes our way. Thank you to all for your continued hard work and support for our students during this time and always.

Sincerely,

William J. Fritz
President

