



**College Council  
November 21, 2019**

Good afternoon and welcome.

To start I would like to have acknowledging the passing on November 6 of one of our long-time members, Professor Ed Meehan. Professor Meehan was a recipient of a Dolphin Award this past spring and made unique contributions to our campus. He initiated a number of special projects related to the Willowbrook State School, and then Lifestyles for the Disabled, after Willowbrook's closure. He joined the faculty in Social Science at Richmond College as an Adjunct Assistant Professor in 1973, and rose to the rank of Professor in 1998. We will miss him. Please join me in a moment of silence for Ed Meehan.

Last month I reported that we had submitted our budget plan to CUNY and were waiting for approval. This month we are still waiting for approval (remember that last year the approval came in spring semester!). That said, I have had conversations regarding our finances with the Chancellor and I believe that CUNY is finding ways to assist us. They seem ready to acknowledge the extra costs of caring for a sprawling campus like ours. Nonetheless, I think it is important that we continue to take steps to show efficiencies.

The Provost has been working with the Deans to review efficiencies in academic affairs, we are taking steps to improve collections, the admissions team is hard at work promoting our signature programs, and we are looking at various non-academic efficiencies. Together, the budget puzzle for this year is solvable.

Consistent with my declaration of a "*Lustrum of Infrastructure*", I am announcing a search for a permanent VP of Facilities. I strongly believe that our unique 204 acres, with an infrastructure built as part of the WWII war effort, demands a Vice President focused solely on keeping us operational. We are unique within CUNY for our expansive campus, physical plant, and the

number of open ongoing capital projects. We have a history of not aggressively moving forward our capital projects. We have a history of deferring critical maintenance to balance our budget. We need a VP who is separate from the budgetary process, one who is not tempted to cut corners to save money, but one who is a voice for facilities, health, and safety. The Provost will chair the search and I am in the process of putting together a small committee, consistent with CUNY's new search guidelines, with a focus on attracting underutilized applicants. I anticipate that finalists will visit campus shortly after the start of spring semester in late January.

I am happy to report that we have received funding to start the design phase for reconstruction of the Student Center Dining Hall and Kitchen. Along with the Hardscape Project and repaving our sidewalks, redesign and construction of the Dining Hall will help in the recruitment of students as we create and maintain a welcoming campus. I also authorized an emergency release of funds (about \$42k) so that facilities can order 8 new hot water heaters and 19 circulator pumps. I know the budget is tight but with the winter coming on I felt hot water was critical. As a point of explanation, our hot water heaters were purchased in 1993 with an expected life span of 25 years. It is not a surprise that they are failing now and their failure right on schedule underscores the need for long range financial planning for life-cycle replacement.

Last month, I discussed the construction of the new substation. As a follow-up I held a meeting with representatives from Con Ed who visited the campus to ensure coordination as we move forward on the project. One thing was clear – we need to continue to invest in the old station to keep it operational while we build the new one. I am also pushing a sustainable micro-grid for us as a long-term solution to our power outages.

I have consistently been saying that serious conversations over important issues that impact the lives of people on Staten Island and beyond should take place right here at CSI, Staten Island's *Anchor Institution* and the only public institution of higher education in the borough. We are clearly hitting the mark on this point.

Last Friday, Senator Kristen Gillibrand held a town hall on campus, the third time she has chosen the College to address constituents. At the town hall, Gillibrand was asked by Staten Islanders everything from what her plan was to address the opioid crisis on the Island, how to

curb the rising cost of a college education at the College of Staten Island and how to stop the city's overdevelopment in the borough in protected areas.

Tuesday, Borough President Jimmy Oddo joined New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), CSI, the Greenbelt Conservancy, and the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods to present a Forest Ecology Forum focused on threats to young trees in Staten Island's parks

Dr. William McShea, research ecologist from the Smithsonian Institute's Conservation Ecology Center, along with Ken Scarlatelli, NYS DEC regional natural resources supervisor, and Dr. Susan Elbin, NYC Audubon director of conservation and science discussed documented severe damage on Staten Island's state-owned parks and natural areas from over-browsing -- to the point where few new trees are surviving past the seedling stage. A panel discussion, led by CSI's biology and environmental science departments, followed the presentation.

Yesterday, Professor Benimoff and I returned from a conference at the University at Albany sponsored by CUNY, SUNY, and the UPR System focused on Resilience in Sustainable Reconstruction (RISE). I presented the interdisciplinary work and serious conversations that we held at the college in the face of Superstorm Sandy.

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul announced that Staten Island's North Shore will be the beneficiary of a statewide initiative focused on revitalizing downtown areas. Our borough will receive \$10 million as the fourth-round winner of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Downtown Revitalization Initiative for the New York City region.

The grant monies will be utilized to revitalize the areas in the North Shore neighborhoods of St. George, Tompkinsville, and Stapleton. I have received indications from the BP, the SI Chamber of Commerce, and SIEDC that without CSI's collaboration the Borough would not

have received the funding, and it is anticipated that we will be receiving a significant portion of the funds.

In closing I just want to remind you of some important upcoming events. Tuesday, December 3 is GivingTuesday, a global day of giving and all CUNY campuses are taking part. Our goal is to raise \$10,000 for Student Scholarships. I want to stress that the money we are seeking is to assist all of our students, and is not targeted for athletic scholarships. Please spread the word as we try and provide additional support to our students.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, the College will hold its annual Celestial Ball at the Richmond County Country Club. The event is one of the CSI Foundation's chief fundraisers to provide unrestricted operating money for the campus. We will be honoring Professor June Como, National Grid, and 1199 Training and Employment Funds.

December 13<sup>th</sup> we will have our annual Convocation where we will recognize years of service as well as reporting out on many of the exciting things we have been doing to advance our strategic plan.

Thank you and I hope you have a "Happy Thanksgiving!"

