



College Council

September 19, 2019

Good afternoon and welcome.

I've sent two messages out regarding the budget to communicate as early as possible what's happening here and at CUNY, as this will be a difficult, but survivable, year. I know it is of no real comfort but we are still faring better than much of public higher education. In the next two weeks, we will be closing our 2019 budget and I hope that we will be able to end in the black, but that is unclear. I will be sending out several more messages in the upcoming weeks focused on various aspects of the budget. As is the norm, all of my campus communications are posted on the President's webpage.

We are in the process of consulting with the P&B and the CC budget committee regarding our FY20 budget plan. Until we resolve certain items in our budget forecast, I intend to tightly control our OTPS and hiring.

I have heard rumors of staff concerns over possible layoffs and furloughs of full-time staff. For the record: I have not heard of nor been involved in any conversations either on campus or at CUNY that suggest full-time staff will be laid off or furloughed. That said, it will be a difficult year with OTPS and filling vacancies outside of health and safety positions.

I don't want to repeat information that I have already sent and will only briefly mention actions we will need to take this year. A big portion of our situation is the result of continued state cuts and the state not funding the rising cost of labor. Regrettably, that is beyond our control. There are three areas within our control: enrollment, collections, and staffing. The Provost will be speaking shortly and in greater detail regarding work that has been done by a team from enrollment management, academic advisement, student affairs, and the budget office.

Last spring, we brought Alexander Scott on board as AVP of enrollment management. During his time in that position, it has become clear that moving enrollment to Academic Affairs would help in coordinating enrollment activities. Consistent with recent CUNY reorganization, the AVP of Enrollment will now directly report to the Provost and will interact with the deans at regular Provost's Council meetings.

Associate Provost Ralf Peetz has been working with the Frontier Set, an initiative funded by the Gates Foundation with the goal of increasing retention, student success, and erasing success gaps by race and income. This is critical, as many of our Associates students are helped by this program and retaining associates is one of the best ways to help our bottom line.

Last year, with the addition of a retention specialist the overall percentage of students in good academic standing increased by 1.2% and the number of students dismissed due to academic standing decreased by 112 students. This year we are implementing EAB navigate, a comprehensive technology that links administrators, faculty, staff, and advisors in a coordinated care network to further support students from enrollment through graduation.

Last fall we brought in a consultant to review our collections practices. The consultant recommended a number of actions, many of which have been implemented and we have seen modest improvements. We continue to be more aggressive with deregistration of students who owe the College money and we believe this, along with improved financial aid numbers and the ability of students to now use credit cards will help us further improve our collections rates. We need to focus more on collections and less on headcount. Our budget is based on collections and it does us no good to have students enrolled who do not pay or who do not complete their financial aid forms.

As part of the FY21 budget request, CUNY has asked that we include efficiencies that the college will implement to address our budget and that will be used in support of a request to the State for increased funding. In other words, we can ask for more than we save. We've identified a number of areas in facilities and I remain committed to the "*lustrum of infrastructure*" and giving priority to keeping our campus environment a safe and pleasant place to work and study. Moving enrollment to Academic Affairs will provide the opportunity to consider staffing efficiencies.

It's no secret that Academic Affairs absorbs the majority of our budget – which is appropriate. Because of that, over the next few weeks the Provost, working with the deans and chairs, will lead a deep dive into actions we can take in Academic Affairs to help resolve our budget deficit and to improve efficiencies. Meanwhile, I and the VP's will be doing the same thing for non-academic areas.

CSI has four mandates from the Chancellor and the Board for this year:

- adjusting our budget so that our tax levy expenditures do not exceed our tax levy resources
- increasing online and hybrid course offerings
- increasing workforce diversity, especially within the administration
- increasing the amount of business we do with MWBE.

In the midst of a difficult budget year it is easy to lose sight of the good things that are happening on campus. After considerable lobbying, CUNY recognized that our capital/critical maintenance dollars were too low and the historic funding formula did not fit our campus. This year they doubled it for a second consecutive year. The increased funding will allow critical projects to move forward such as:

- repair of our sidewalks
- repairs to the leaking roofs on the towers of our academic buildings,
- construction of a new electrical substation,
- skylight repairs for 6S, and
- the first-floor construction in building 2M
- Continuation of our hardscape project

Earlier this week I was informed that CUNY has directed DASNY to proceed with a managed project for the reconstruction of our cafeteria/dining hall, providing funds so we can move forward on the design phase.

In addition to our CUNY capital budget we receive a great deal of support from our elected officials. The reason why we receive this support is because they believe in the mission of the college and the progress we are making. Next week, we will formally announce plans to develop the CSI Genomic Research Facility. The Genomic Research Facility, made possible through funding from Borough President James Oddo and Councilman Steve Matteo, will allow faculty and students to conduct genome sequencing and analysis to search for genetic variations in DNA that may cause the development or progression of diseases or conditions such as cancer, drug addiction, and autism.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not mention the gift of two alumni, Jay Chazanoff and his wife Lucille, for the naming of the Lucille and Jay Chazanoff School of Business. They are powerful voices in the Staten Island Community for the benefits of public education. I'd like to congratulate Dean Holak, her team, and Cheryl Adolph for their work in attaining this incredible gift, one of the highest ever in the entire Borough, from true friends and partners to the college.

Finally, I want to leave you with a brief 90 second snippet of a promotional video prepared by Professor Gerstner and a team of his students. They really did a magnificent job in capturing so many of the wonderful aspects of this college. The full video will be up on our website soon.

Thank you,  
William J. Fritz  
President

