

College Council
President's Remarks
October 15, 2020

I want to start by addressing concerns that are being raised around the nation regarding structural, institutional, and systemic racism.

For the record, I take a strong personal stance against any form of racism, I believe that “Black Lives Matter” and abhor the all-too-frequent stories of police killings of unarmed Black men. We are better than this as a society and Higher Ed is in a great position to guide a helpful conversation.

As a campus we have – and will continue -- to condemn racism and discrimination. I continue to reaffirm our longstanding commitment to diversity and equal opportunity in all aspects at our institution.

However, statements alone, while important, do not address action that is needed. We must challenge our views of race and

society and understand our roles in addressing the injustices through our actions. We need to follow the lead of our own CSI Foundation which recently passed a resolution to have board membership reflect the composition of the CSI student body. We need to look at the demographic data of our employees as well as recent Climate and COACHE surveys to see if we are where we want to be as a campus.

I am consulting with IPC to formulate recommendations on how to move forward to begin having thoughtful conversation about systemic racism and inequality that have plagued the nation and will share a proposed plan shortly.

Part of the proposed plan will include a Challenge to the College community. I encourage everyone to take part in the challenge, which will help us develop a true understanding of what the national movement is about, generate ideas, spark discussion, and come up with concrete solutions to help address these serious and important issues. This is not just about addressing racism and what is happening in this world– but about

developing a more inclusive campus overall. We must take a hard look at ourselves and see how we can make this a better community, and a better world for everyone.

The proposed plan will include a series of readings: “21 Days of Reading”, based on a similar program by the American Bar Association. In addition, I envision virtual discussions and lectures for the campus community. Speakers might include faculty from CSI and CUNY as well as City Agencies who have unparalleled knowledge about these matters through their scholarship, research, and experience.

If any of our faculty want to volunteer to facilitate these discussions, take part in panel discussions, or submit a paper, article or other publication concerning diversity, inclusion, antiracism, or any other topic on equality, to be used in our reading challenge, please let us know.

I also encourage our community to take part in upcoming events being planned around campus as they are educational, inspiring, and extremely informative. When scheduled, these events will be shared via email and listed on our website under “CSI Campus Events.”

In addition to upcoming planned events there have been a number of significant campus statements, events, and discussions, that have occurred over the summer through the start of the Fall semester including the following:

- My [statement](#) condemning the killing of George Floyd;
- Vice President Borrero hosted a virtual event, The Evolution of Juneteenth a discussion with public historian and CSI alum Debbie-Ann Paige. (Happy to note that Governor Cuomo just signed legislation that declares Juneteenth an official public holiday in New York State!);
- Vice President Borrero brought together all the Directors in Student Affairs to discuss how they can create a more equitable institution for our students. They came up with some ideas and will be putting together student focus

groups for their feedback so they could put their plan into action;

- Provost Parrish has reconvened a committee to review the Campus Climate and COACHE Survey results, analyze the data and come up with ideas and recommendations to address areas of concern;
- I am challenging the administrative team to come up with ways to engage in meaningful discussions and make changes within their divisions;
- High level discussions with cabinet and Deans are taking place to begin looking at how we can increase diversity amongst faculty and staff, to better reflect our student body;
- My annual [reaffirmation letter](#) of the College of Staten Island's Commitment to Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action.

I would also like to acknowledge the following members of our faculty and staff for putting together meaningful and enlightening programs for our community. They include:

- Prof. Lara Saguisag of the English Department, who started an antiracist reading group;

- The CSI Legal Studies Institute, led by Prof. Michael Paris, Chair of Political Science and Global Affairs, is hosting a Race, Law and Justice Lecture Series, which includes [“Racial Segregation and the Enduring Battle over Brown V. Board of Education”](#) on October 21st, [“A Constitutional Right to Literacy? A Critical Race Theory Perspective on Gary B. v. Whitmer”](#) on November 4th, and [“Segregation: A Short History of ‘Structural Racism’ and What to Do About It”](#) on November 19th;
- Jeremiah Jurkiewicz of the LGBTQ Resource Center, and Pluralism and Diversity Coordinator, is presenting [A Conversation with LGBTQ+ People of Color](#) on October 29, 2020, together with the Wagner College Center for Intercultural Advancement and the Pride Center of Staten Island;
- Prof. Wilma Jones of the CSI Library, developed a [research guide](#) on Race Matters and Social Justice which is published on their website;
- Economic Development’s Tech Incubator recently hosted “Tech Talk ” with Pierre Laguerre, CEO & Founder of Fleeting who discussed the challenges he faced raising

capital for his company and how he successfully became the first African American to raise \$1M from investors through equity crowdfunding.

With respect to the Budget, the only good news on the budget is that our enrollment is up about 1% over last year and we should be able to close FY20 with a slightly positive balance and less use of non-tax levy money than in previous years.

We still do not have a budget for FY21 and are living on an allocation from CUNY through January 2021. The allocation is based on a 20% reduction or withholding of state appropriations from FY 20. This 20% temporary withholding is likely to be permanent or at least a significant portion of it. This is constant with the Governor's public statement that State agencies may face significant budget cuts.

Right now, the State is reporting they are facing a \$15 billion shortfall and even if there is some federal relief, I don't anticipate it to be enough to avoid significant midyear cuts.

Remember any cuts are on top of our \$-4.1M structural deficit and our \$-3.7M challenge of a flat budget from FY 20. It is an understatement to say that it looks like this is going to be a tough year.

As I have noted before, CUNY was allocated \$250 million by the federal government in CARES Act funding. These funds included \$118 million specifically allocated for Student Emergency Grants, most of which has already been provided directly to students. I should note that 100% of CSI's share has been distributed and I want to thank the Petrie Foundation Emergency Grant Committee for making this happen.

CUNY has decided to allocate \$41M of the remaining \$132M campus money now and the rest will be allocated at some point during the year once our FY21 budget has been approved.

The \$41M is broken down as follows:

1. \$16M in reimbursement for tuition and fees:

- CSI will receive \$2.5M to reimburse us for costs expended for student activity fees, dorm charges, tuition, fees, and adult and continuing education charges in Spring 2020 and/or Summer 2020 semesters.

2. \$5M for Health and Wellness:

- CSI received \$247K to be spent on expanded clinical health services, including health and wellness assessments, and increased face to face psychotherapy via distance technology for students during the pandemic

3. \$20M for IT expenditure and reimbursement:

- CSI will receive \$975k for reimbursement of supplies purchased by the College to support distance learning, including laptop, iPad and hot spots, as well as for future purchases of equipment, software and technology needed to continue distance learning.

With respect to reopening, we are staying the course, following our approved re-entry plan. I anticipate that Spring will look

much like the Fall. Return to campus continues to be slow to ensure the safety of all. Any spike in positive cases could force us into a complete shutdown and put our community at risk. As of today, since our reopening, we have been notified of eleven students and/or staff who have reported testing positive for the coronavirus. None of these cases resulted in exposure to the campus community, as the students are non-residents taking remote classes and the staff are working remotely.

Please let us know if a student, faculty or staff report testing positive for COVID-19 or having COVID related symptoms. Student Affairs can assist students who need accommodations or services while in quarantine or isolation and HR can assist employees who may need to take a leave of absence, or find testing sites.

I will let the Provost report on details of our Self-Study and preparations for the Spring 2022 accreditation visit. Mel Pipe, Tara Mastrorilli and Chris Miller have recently presented to IPC

details on comments from our VP Liaison as well as details of our timeline.

Thank you.

William J. Fritz
President