



College Council  
May 21, 2020

Good afternoon.

I want to start out with a moment of silence for those of our community and our friends and family members who have passed during this crisis or who have been severely impacted by the disease.

[Pause for Silence]

Thank you

Our budget picture remains much as I reported at our April meeting; there are still many uncertainties.

The governor has publicly announced that due to a \$13B decline in state revenues all state agencies will be cut an average of 14%. What we don't know is how those cuts will be allocated across various agencies. For planning purposes, CUNY has asked that we plan for a 10% reduction or about \$10.8M for CSI. This is going to be tough as there are not many places where we can find that kind of money.

Of course, balancing this are enrollment trends and possible one-time federal money from the CARES act. Our campus received an initial allocation of \$12.6M with half of that (\$6.3M) as direct aid to students. This week all students eligible to receive Title IV money will begin receiving their checks. Students who are Title IV eligible but who have not filed a FASFA have until June 15 to file their paperwork to receive their check which will range from \$204 to \$1020 for CSI depending on whether they are full or part time, if they are Pell eligible or if they have dependents.

Use of our \$7.3M campus money (\$6.3M campus allocation plus \$957k allocation to CSI as an Hispanic Serving Institution) will require state approval. CUNY Central Office has submitted a plan to the state and we are awaiting their approval. It is not clear how much of the money will be discretionary but it is clear that this is one-time money and should not be counted on to cover recurring costs.

This financial picture is consistent with my many campus messages this semester.

<https://www.csi.cuny.edu/about-csi/president-leadership/office-president/presidential-communications>

The Provost, Carlos Serrano and I, along with the Deans and Associate Provosts have been working with the Personnel and Budget Committee since March exploring various scenarios and we have shared detailed information on the overall campus budget, research funding, and cost of instruction. We have also shared with them examples of where we may have to make reductions (adjuncts, temp services, unsponsored research, vacancies, transportation, energy, administrative efficiencies).

The Institutional Planning Committee has met twice and will have a third meeting next week to discuss the Middle States design, budget, research expenditures, and to begin a high-level discussion of how we can mold academic offerings to attract more students in the post-COVID world. We plan to meet next week and are exploring the possibility of meeting over the summer. I have also the PSC (three times and will meet with them a fourth time next week), with the HEO Steering Committee and held several town halls (1 HEO, 1 Gittleson) to discuss the pandemic and the reasons for our budget challenges. I have also asked the administration to hold their own town hall meetings and to meet with and if invited to consult with appropriate College Council and Faculty Senate Committees on these issues.

I will continue to meet with P&B throughout the summer, to work through the budget decisions that we'll have to make. Additionally, I have put together a committee, to be chaired by Hope Berte and Provost Parrish to review steps that will be need to be taken for us to safely return to campus. However, I don't anticipate that we'll have much of a presence on campus in the fall, but we need to plan for the possibility of a phased opening and restoring a few very limited services.

As you all know, VP Ken Iwama is moving on to become the chancellor at Indiana University Northwest. I am incredibly proud of and happy for Ken, who has been a trusted confidant, skilled and innovative administrator, and a zealous advocate for the college. I know we will all miss his infectious optimism. In light of the financial situation, I will not be hiring a replacement for Ken, but am reviewing how best to reassign his responsibilities. We will also not be moving forward with a hiring for the Dean of Education and the Director of Auxiliary Services search has also been stopped.

I want to be clear, absent federal funding, this will be a difficult 6 to 12 months. I'm not telling you anything you don't know or haven't read. You've also likely read that this is true across the board in higher education.

More importantly, many of the stories that address the difficulties that higher ed is facing, also note that those colleges that can weather the crisis stand to gain big from the fallout. Unfortunately, for many schools, closing is a strong possibility.

The shuttering of many universities, particularly small liberal arts colleges combined with the possibility of prolonged recession puts us in a position to see greatly increased enrollment a year from now. What is crucial for us now, is to hold together as a college community right now, with the expectation that when we do come through this difficult time, we'll be able to come back stronger. We have much to offer. Our faculty have done amazing work in getting courses online right in the middle of a semester, our faculty and students continue to gain national recognition for their scholarship, and, most importantly, our tuition is about the lowest in the nation. As I wrote recently in the SI Advance, why would anyone even think of going elsewhere when they can have a world-class education, whether online or face to face, right here at CSI.

I have to confess, like many of you, this has been the most challenging time in my professional life. Worrying about and trying to ensure the well-being of our campus community – physically, emotionally, financially – is not an easy burden to shoulder but has been made easier by the efforts of the campus community.

I want to close by thanking everyone for the work they have done this semester. I'm always grateful for the dedication of our faculty and staff to our students and the local community. I am particularly grateful this year, knowing the work that was done in a short amount of time, under difficult and stressful circumstances. I wish I could say that those circumstances are behind us, but I am heartened that the resolve and efforts that guided us through these last few months will lead us through to the end of this crisis to better times.

I hope you all have a safe and healthy break.

William J. Fritz  
President

