



College Council
September 17, 2020

Good afternoon and welcome back to the start of a new academic year. I trust everyone had a productive summer and had at least a little time to relax. I know this is not the start of the academic year that any of us wanted or anticipated even six months ago.

This Fall semester we are working and learning mostly online and are preparing for the possibility that we may be doing so for the rest of the academic year. We have been slowly moving forward with the implementation of our re-opening plan with safety first as our guiding principle. We are currently accommodating a very small number of students in face to face classes (less than 25 per day) on campus in courses that require in person instruction.

Researchers have been submitting research safety plans and we have approved some to come back to campus consistent with the plan. More classes and researchers will be accommodated only when it is safe to do so.

Thankfully, we have not had any confirmed cases of COVID-19 on campus since reopening and I hope that it will stay that way. Currently, NYS mandates that if there are more than 100 reported cases, we will have to shut down for a period of time. This is another reason why we are not in a rush to move everyone back on

the campus. Our goal is to keep everyone safe, and to follow the plans that we have put into place.

At the moment, we still do not have an approved budget and are existing on monthly allocations from CUNY to cover our basic operating costs, mostly in facilities.

The \$6.3M in CARES Act money allocated to students has already been distributed. However, there still remains \$7.3M in institutional CARES money, but we have no spending authority to use these funds at the present time. Guidelines on how we can access these funds is anticipated once we receive our budget allocation.

In the spring, NYS reported a revenue shortfall of \$-13.3B which has now grown to \$-14.5B and the governor has publicly mentioned potential cuts to state agencies ranging from 14% to 20%. However, the State is likely waiting on federal stimulus money before passing a budget and our board sees no sense in passing a budget with this much uncertainty.

The State enacted budget, effective April 1st, while reported to be a flat budget compared to the previous year, was equivalent to a 3% cut to the Senior colleges or \$-3.7M to CSI, due to rising mandatory costs. It's important to note that this cut was on top of our previously reported \$-4.1M structural deficit.

In response to this news, we worked with P&B over the summer on a strategy to close an estimated budget challenge of \$-11.8M based on the State enacted budget cut equivalent to \$-3.7M, a \$-4.1M structural deficit, and an anticipated 5% decline in enrollment valued at \$-4.0M.

Saving strategies included: reductions in temp services & overtime, reduction of transportation services, administrative efficiencies, energy savings, and holding positions vacant due to the CUNY hiring freeze. In addition, we targeted use of more RF overhead funds. This strategy still left us with a \$-2.4M shortfall.

Although we generated considerable savings from our strategy, we did not meet all targets which would have increased the \$-2.4M shortfall if not for an unexpected last-minute surge in enrollment. Put together, our plan mostly balanced out with about the same \$-2.4M gap still remaining. It is important to note that any additional cuts we may face, will be on top of this \$-2.4M shortfall.

The slight increase (0.5 to 1%) in enrollment compared to last Fall really helped (\$400k to \$800k) and is due to the hard work of our faculty, the registrar's office and the enrollment management and advisement teams. In addition, our retention numbers are exceptional this year and I think that is a reflection of the efforts made by our faculty in transitioning to remote learning, as well as the outreach efforts made by Advisement

We are happy to announce that we will be having a virtual commencement in late October or Early November. We had hoped we would be able to have a traditional ceremony this year, however, it became clear as we got closer to the Fall that it wasn't going to be possible, but we promise to keep as many traditions as we can in the virtual program.

I wish to congratulate the members of our faculty who have received prestigious grants and awards for exemplary academic research and will be recognized by the Provost.

The College continues to receive national recognition as *U.S. News & World Report* recently ranked CSI as one of the 2021 Best Regional Universities North; our Masters of Nursing program was included in its Top 100 Best Nursing Schools (Master's) list; and our Engineering Program ranked as one of the Best undergraduate engineering programs. CSI was also ranked and noted as: Top performers in social mobility; and as a Top public school.

Business Insider also named CSI one of 24 Colleges with the Best Return on Investment.

Even though there is debate on the methodology of these rankings, it always helps our enrollment when we are reported in a positive light.

Looking into the future, I would like to challenge the campus to start thinking about how our work and instruction might look post COVID.

Perhaps online learning is a way to grow enrollment and solve overcrowding and space problems that had been a growing problem. Many employees benefit from eliminating long commutes and working remotely on a permanent basis for some employees may be an option to consider.

I know there has been concern over a slight increase in average section size. My view is that we offer too few large sections and too few small sections. Now is the time to talk about which classes we can make larger so that we can offer more smaller classes, as appropriate for the pedagogy.

I believe that we can use these unfortunate times as an opportunity for positive change. This kind of forward thinking can benefit us as a College and I don't think we should let that opportunity pass us by.

Thank you.

William J. Fritz
President

