



March 18, 2021  
College Council Remarks

Good afternoon.

To start, I want to state that I am personally horrified and saddened about the rise of hate crimes being perpetrated against those of Asian and Pacific Islander descent in this country. I am specifically appalled at the events that unfolded in Atlanta over the past few days. We must fight against such hate and speak out against any verbal, violent, or other forms of attack against others. We must be united in our fight to end all forms of racial injustice. We must embrace our diversity and strive to be more inclusive and welcoming for all. I know you will all stand with me in this mission.

In that spirit, we have been engaging in open and honest dialogue on this campus to further our goals of becoming a more welcoming and inclusive campus. The [21-Day Equity Habit](#)

[Building Challenge](#) is in its fourth and final week, with our [wrap up session](#) scheduled for Monday, and there has been some really great dialogue and sharing of stories, thoughts, and experiences that I have found incredibly moving. I encourage others to [join us](#) tomorrow if you have the opportunity.

In addition, the Provost will be announcing the formation of our Diversity Council. It is my understanding that he is planning the first meeting shortly but he will speak to that in his remarks. There is much work to be done, and I look forward to more good changes ahead of us.

March is Women's History Month, an annual celebration of the achievements and vital contributions women have made throughout our history, which continue to have such profound impact in our modern world. If you have a chance to attend, the Library is hosting a virtual event on March 23 entitled, [A Centennial Legacy: Voting Rights in View of the 19th Amendment](#), during which guest speaker, Gabriella Leone, of the Staten Island Museum, will reflect about the women's

suffrage movement on Staten Island. You can [register](#) for this event on our website.

I want to thank everyone for the discussions that are taking place on campus concerning the proposed new governance plan. I truly appreciate those who have reached out to me and asked for more time to meet and engage in more detailed, collegial, and productive discussions in order to help make the proposed plan the best for the College.

I am inviting thoughtful and collegial conversation. The document, as is, is a framework. It is a living document. I sincerely hope you provide your thoughts and suggestions to help improve upon what is there and ensure that all ideas, concerns, and suggestions are heard and considered. The principle behind the proposal is to have an understanding of shared governance, to recognize the separate and unique roles and responsibilities of faculty, staff, and administration, and to push decision making to a lower level. This plan requires and

demands civility, respect, and inclusion. Please be sure to visit the [Teams](#) site to review the proposed plan, make suggestions, sign up for the town hall, submit a question, or reach out to me via email.

The date for the town hall will be announced in the near future and the referendum will be scheduled for an appropriate time thereafter. I look forward to continuing to engage in thoughtful and productive discussions of this important proposal.

The Re-Entry Committee, led by VP Hope Berte and Provost Michael Parrish, will continue meeting and discussing reopening while they work on updating our re-entry plan. While we have not yet received our stimulus funding, we are focusing on submitting a plan to CUNY to obtain the funding to move forward with our plan for OIT to purchase and test equipment to help prepare classrooms for hybrid courses, and for facilities to purchase the supplies needed to open more buildings and classrooms in a safe manner for the Fall. As I have announced before, we want to have as many people on campus in the fall as

is safe. For now, that means Phase 3 of our re-entry plan with about 25% of the campus community being able to be on campus each day. This number is a result of state guidelines and the physical layout of our campus. The number is different for each CUNY campus. We can only consider going above 25% if the state were to change the rules: social distancing, hand washing, and mask wearing.

I am sure everyone is aware that our budget has been a roller coaster ride this year. We finally have an approved budget with only 3 months left to go. As a reminder, we are dealing with multiple challenges:

- A flat budget from previous years that is equivalent to a 3% cut due to rising mandatory costs
- In fact, while we have generated significant salary savings due to the hiring freeze, these have barely covered the mandatory costs
- No tuition increase this year
- A cut from the state of 20% that then became 5% which will continue at least through next year. Some mitigating

factors make it more like 2% but it is a significant cut just the same.

- We are also dealing with a structural deficit that has, in part, resulted from historic under collection. The great news is that due to the hard work of our bursar, starting about two years ago our collections started to rise, narrowing the gap between us and other senior campuses. Then COVID hit and we made the decision not to pursue collections as aggressively. That made our rates fall but it was the right thing to do. Hopefully some of our stimulus money will help with some of the shortfalls
- There is a lot of stimulus money earmarked for CSI that is still in play – money from both the CARES Act and the CRRSAA Act. However, this is one-time money, it will have to cover at least two fiscal years, we don't yet know all of the rules for how it can be spent, and we do not have access to most of it
- We estimate full utilization of remaining balances on CARES and MSI funding plus access to at least some of the second round of stimulus funds (CRRSAA) will be

required to end the year with a small positive balance and aid in our campus re-opening plans for the fall semester

- Overall, we project reduced spending by approximately \$4.1M or 3.7% compared to last year. This reduction in spending has reduced the need to rely on a greater use of CRRSAA funds to balance our budget, and instead using it for re-opening plans. I know the lack of hiring has been difficult for people, and I appreciate the work that has been done to help get us through this year without filling positions, but it has definitely put us in a better position to grow as a college as we come out of this pandemic

The bottom line for all of this is we still have a little less than a \$-3M shortfall that we need to close. We are hoping that the stimulus money will be enough but have been told that there will be CUNY campuses whose deficits may well exceed what is available this year.

Thank you.

William J. Fritz

President

