



College Council
February 18, 2021

Good afternoon. Welcome Back to Spring Semester. I hope everyone had a nice break.

February is Black History Month, dedicated to recognizing the achievements of African Americans while also acknowledging the unjust treatment they endured in their own country.

- There have been several great events for Black History Month scheduled throughout the month sponsored by different departments and divisions.
- Student Affairs put together a robust series of events – some co-sponsored by academic departments. I hope everyone got a chance to sign up for at least one of their programs.
- Of note, on February 26, Student Affairs will be hosting [What Does Racial Equity Mean to Me?](#) in which a diverse group of CSI students and faculty will share their thoughts on this question, as well as strategies for achieving racial equity. This event will feature a reading by Distinguished Professor and award-winning poet Patricia Smith-DeSilva.
- You can find these events, as well as links to register for them, on our home page under [CSI Campus Events](#).

Monday, we will begin our [21-Day Equity Habit Building Challenge](#). An email will be sent out shortly to the College community, with a link to the [Website](#) and an invitation to register for the first Zoom session scheduled on February 26 when we will share our experiences and begin to really listen to one another. All are invited to join us.

Thank you to those who provided feedback on our Diversity Equity and Inclusion programming. We are finalizing our Diversity Council, and many of your suggestions will be considered by the Council. We have important work ahead of us, and I believe that this Council will be able to help us with our goals.

My main goal and my personal challenge to the campus is to (1) close the achievement gaps for our students, and (2) at a minimum, have no underutilization in any academic or non-academic department.

Unfortunately, Commencement will be virtual again this year, as it will be on all CUNY campuses. The ceremony is scheduled to be released for viewing on Thursday, May 27, 2021.

Earlier this month, we held the Legislative Forum. We were joined by our elected officials, their aides, faculty, and our Student Government President. It went very well, and we are grateful for the continued support they have shown for our students and institution.

The CSI Foundation virtual fundraiser, "[Giving from the Heart](#)," premiered on February 11. The event is focused on raising funds to support our students during the pandemic and will be open through the end of the month. As is true for much of public higher education, support from friends who believe in our mission of

providing access to high-quality education for our students has increased during the pandemic.

If you haven't seen it already, you should view the event, which you can [register](#) for on our Website. Presidential Medals were awarded to Pulitzer Prize Winner and Distinguished Professor, Tyehimba Jess – who gave a powerful and moving speech; Andrea Dalzell, a proud graduate of our Nursing program, and the only disabled registered nurse in New York State, who has been recognized as a pioneering activist for people with disabilities; and Dr. Michael Nakao and his wife, singer-songwriter Kate McDonnell, alumni, friends, and donors of the College for many years.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have had some notable achievements:

- The College of Staten has been named Number 2 on the 2021-2022 Military Friendly® Schools list under the category “Small Public.”
- CSI is Number 1 on Best Value Schools' list of the [19 Best Music Colleges in New York in 2021](#).
- According to the final 2020 NCLEX-RN reports, our Associate Nursing students had a 92.79% pass rate total for calendar year 2020.
- Dean Balsamini will be honored with the Louis R. Miller Leadership Award for his leadership and community service in helping small businesses – especially during the pandemic. Guiding these businesses through the loan applications process, it's projected that the Small Business Development Center helped create or save 1,900 local jobs with an economic impact of

\$25M. This is what borough stewardship and being an anchor institution is all about.

Our budget still remains uncertain but we know a lot more now than a few months ago. We have been living off an 80% allocation (20% holdback) based on the FY20 budget. The good news is that the state recently announced that the 20% holdback is off the table. Instead there is a 5% budget cut for FY21 and FY22. The CUNY Board has approved a budget request for FY22 that includes the 5% cut for at least two years (FY21 and FY22) and authority for a tuition increase for four more years of up to \$200/year, but that would have to be approved each year by the CUNY Board. The request does not include increases for mandatory costs.

The bad news is that a 5% cut is on top of a flat budget that equates to a 3% cut. Therefore, the 5% cut is really 8%. On top of that, we still have a spring enrollment decrease that looks normal for the senior campuses but is still a decrease, and of course, we are still dealing with the structural deficit. We must continue to be vigilant.

Yet again, our capital budget is in relatively good shape. There were no reductions and CSI's share has nearly quadrupled over the past three years. State and City projects deemed non-health- and safety-related were shut down due to the pandemic. A number of projects have been approved to resume; however, many are still in a holding pattern.

Our stimulus money sounds good but has mostly yet to be given to us. We must also remember that stimulus money is one-time money. Our priorities for these funds are: health and safety, to get the campus open, to assist students, and lost revenue. While this is better than December, time will tell if the stimulus money will offset our budget challenges – probably, but with great caution.

Consistent with the direction of the Chancellor, our goal for the fall is to have as much in-person programming as is responsible. Responsible means that we must follow our State-approved reentry plan with the understanding that the actual number of people permitted on campus per day will vary by each CUNY campus, as State-approved reopening plans vary greatly across CUNY due to each unique campus challenge.

For CSI, this means we are planning to implement Phase 3 of our plan by the start of Fall Semester and this will allow up to 25% of our community to come to campus each day. Unfortunately, the numbers cannot go above this unless the rules of social distancing change. I personally think that social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing will be with us for a long time. I have directed the Provost and the Deans to work out the schedule that best fits the needs of our students. Remote work, remote teaching, and remote learning are going to be with us for a long time.

I am looking forward to the work ahead of us. There is much to do and we are all working hard to address the many different competing priorities, all of which are very important to our community. I want to thank you all for your hard work as we move forward together, keeping the needs of our students first and foremost in all that we do, consistent with our Strategic Priority of Student Success.

William J. Fritz

President

