

President's Report to the College Council February 16, 2017

Good afternoon and let me welcome everyone back from the winter break to the start of a new spring semester.

On January 9, I sent an email to the College community informing that Governor Cuomo, in his "State of the State Address" earlier in the day in Manhattan, announced that the Institute of Basic Research (IBR) of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities will be transitioned to the College of Staten Island and CUNY. There has been a long collaboration between scientists and staff at IBR and CSI faculty in the Neurosciences (Chemistry, Biology, Physical Therapy) that involves joint publications, collaborative research, joint federal grants, and supervision of masters and doctoral students. This collaboration has historically included the CSI Center for Developmental Neuroscience, operated under a Memorandum of Understanding between IBR and CSI.

This is an exciting opportunity to create a nationally recognized research center that highlights our interdisciplinary strengths in understanding developmental disabilities. Our management of IBR can more effectively advance our respective missions and potentially generate efficiencies by having a single research office and centralized operational support, including streamlining the mentoring of doctoral students in collaboration with The Graduate Center, CUNY and facilitating the submission of city, state, and federal grants and contracts. In response to faculty inquiries, it is my vision that IBR should operate as a revenue generating research center for non-tenure track scientists who would not be merged into existing College academic departments.

It is anticipated that a Blue Ribbon Panel, to be appointed by the Governor, will determine the specific details of the merger. My main concern is that we receive appropriate start-up funding by the State to ensure that the merger does not divert from, but actually supplements resources to our main campus. I, along with Vice President Ken Iwama, traveled to Albany on February 7 to personally speak with every one of our State representatives concerning this start-up funding as well as our budgetary needs on campus, and I will continue to press this point with them. I will keep you informed of any new developments as they occur.

There has been significant turmoil in this country of late which I have responded to publicly on numerous occasions. On November 15, I sent a message to members of the College community voicing support for faculty, staff, and students who may have felt vulnerable or may have had concerns for themselves, their families, or their friends in the aftermath of the Presidential election.

In my report to the College Council on November 17, I reiterated my support, and added that while the College will continue to preserve the free exchange of ideas and differing viewpoints,

which is the foundation of academic freedom, any actions that violated CUNY's Policy on Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination would not be tolerated. I emailed my full report to the College community on December 12.

In my report to the College Council on December 15, I unequivocally stated that CSI would support CUNY's pledge to take a series of steps available under the law to protect and support undocumented students. I emailed my full report to the College community on December 22.

On January 27, the President issued an Executive Order that suspended entry of all refugees for 120 days, barred Syrian refugees indefinitely, and for 90 days blocked entry for citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, including holders of student visas.

On January 30, I emailed the College Community to advise that I applauded and supported the Chancellor's statement that "While I understand it is the responsibility of the administration to keep our country safe, I believe that this Executive Order is inconsistent with the values of openness and inclusiveness that have made CUNY—and our country—great."

It is my understanding that a resolution may be presented to the Faculty Senate calling for the College to designate itself a "Sanctuary Campus" and enact various measures of protection for students, staff, faculty and others on campus. Let me say that I applaud our faculty for exercising their constitutional right and academic freedom to express their deep concern for others shared by many of us, although CUNY has not authorized any of its campuses to self-designate as a "Sanctuary Campus" and holds the position that all CUNY campuses should maintain a consistent and united front. Also, some of our most vulnerable members of our campus community have actually asked us not to self-designate as a "Sanctuary Campus" for fear of inviting targeting and reprisal. However, I will—whether the resolution is passed or not—exercise available power to implement all other actions requested therein.

In fact, we have already acted. For reasons of confidentiality, I am not at liberty to disclose specific details, but as one recent example we successfully assisted a member of the College Community, whose immigration status was placed in jeopardy, by engaging the collaborative power of our faculty, staff, legal counsel, and Government Relations. Additionally, at my request, the Provost has convened a planning group to bring an array of immigration, legal, and other experts to campus to provide accurate information and assistance to students, faculty, and staff who want to know and exercise their rights and remedies under the law. We will continue to work in this proactive manner moving forward.

There is a quote attributed to Mark Twain that "*Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often.*" Working together, all of our actions can speak loudly and often in the coming days and months.

Thank you.

William J. Fritz
President

