

April 3, 2019  
College Council  
President's Remarks  
March 21, 2019

Good Afternoon:

I'm going to keep my remarks brief based on the presentation given by Pat McDermott. I also want to start by acknowledging the work that he and the rest of the Board members do in support of the College. These are people who have had success in different areas of life who donate their time to work with our Advancement team, all in support of the College and the Borough. I am truly grateful for their service.

### **Budget**

I know how frustrated everyone is with this year's budget. I promise you that no one is more frustrated than I am. We submitted our budget request in September 2018, and we're now hoping to finalize it sometime next week. Last year at this time we faced a nearly \$1M deficit. This year we are in a similar situation as we again will be relying on NTL resources to cover the projected deficit. We will still be having a commencement ceremony and proceeding with traditional events, though they may be scaled back somewhat. It is important though that we remain vigilant in trying to limit expenditures and I greatly appreciate the efforts of departments during this time of belt-tightening.

With regards to hiring, I have not terminated searches. However, hires for next Fall will be determined by our overall attrition numbers. Part of our efforts to address next year's budget will include an overall reduction in PS costs. It's also important to repeat what I've mentioned before, namely, health and safety positions will be prioritized when making hiring decisions. For too many years we cut back on some positions with

the belief that we would be able to refill those positions once tuition increases were implemented. As we now know, the tuition increases have not led to an overall budget increase so we have to prioritize hiring in these areas in the coming year.

I mentioned at February's College Council, that the last three years tell me that we cannot rely on the State or CUNY to improve our basic operating budget. Talking with the presidents of the other senior colleges over the last month about their own budget problems has only confirmed this viewpoint. As a result of the budget issues, we've been reviewing every aspect of how we are doing business, evaluating our projections and collections. Based on some of the work over the last several weeks, I am confident that we will be able to cover some additional travel costs and give a percentage of overhead costs to the Departments. I expect to provide those numbers in the next few weeks. Importantly, the work we are doing now will help us next year and going forward.

A team from the Advisement, Admissions and Budget offices has been working together to improve our coordination with collections and improve our Summer and Fall enrollments. I believe this teamwork amongst the groups will really help students and the College.

### **Athletics**

I wanted to briefly follow-up on our application to join Division II Athletics because the College Executive Committee raised some concerns at our last meeting in terms of the review process and ultimately what benchmarks will be used. We were presented with this opportunity late in the Fall semester and I acted quickly because I did not want to lose the opportunity to use this as a recruiting tool for this Fall. Now, because I acted quickly, I don't want to give the impression I acted recklessly. I made this decision based

on my experience as a Provost at a Division I Athletic program and seeing the benefits an athletic program can have on a college in terms of recruitment and college spirit. My decision was also guided by the experience of our fellow CUNY institution Queens College. I spoke extensively with then President of Queens College, and now CUNY Chancellor Felix Matos Rodriguez. Our Athletic Director, Charles Gomes also had discussions with the Queens College AD. Currently, Queens College, which also self-funds its program, has 30 international student athletes and 25 out-of-state student athletes. I expect to have similar, if not better results. Recruitment of 50 out-of-state/international students would generate more than \$605,000 in additional tax levy revenue for the campus. This counts ONLY the differential between in-state and out-of-state tuition and fees. Charles has advised me that we have already accepted 3 international students for our tennis team – 1 from Germany, 1 from Austria, and 1 from Spain and are working with 2 additional German students.

Assuming our application is approved this July, we will have a 3 year probationary period when we will be making an assessment that will be based on measures such as: targets for out-of-state/international enrollment, percentage of students coming from new high schools, academic success of athletes, and increased fundraising targets. This will be an ongoing process and I will be updating and discussing our progress with the College Executive Committee and the College Council over the next 3 years.

The next item I want to address is the news on admissions fraud, a story that is capturing national attention. Because we are an access institution, it may be tempting to argue that scandals like the ones alleged at elite highly competitive institutions could never happen here. Adopting this view would be a mistake and we should use the national conversation to ensure that we have solid policies and practices in place so that such fraud is not tolerated here. We have an *“Alleged Fraud, Abuse or Misconduct”*

button on our home page and I can assure you that our compliance team takes all reports seriously, whether or not they are anonymous, and investigates them to the greatest extent possible. Compliance and integrity are cornerstones of my administration and we will not tolerate fraud, abuse, or misconduct in any form.

This has been a good week for us. As an institution, 25% of our enrolled students are Hispanic, allowing us to be designated a Hispanic Serving Institution. With this designation, we will be eligible for grants, including HSI STEM grants.

Additionally, the Department of Social Work received official Commission on Accreditation (COA) Reaffirmation Decision letter from the February 2019 COA meeting for the baccalaureate social work program at the College of Staten Island.

The School of Education was informed recently that their proposal for a Doctorate in Educational Leadership was approved by the NY State Board of Education, following previous approval by CUNY's Board of Trustees. The program will now go to the state legislature for review. Congratulations to Dean Ken Gold and the team that crafted the program documents.

Lastly, I have forwarded a recommendation to the Board of Trustees that Jane Kurtin, the Staten Island Advance reporter who exposed the conditions at the Willowbrook State School and changed the face of mental health care in the United States, receive an honorary degree at this year's commencement.

Sincerely,

William J. Fritz

President