

## College Council

May 17, 2018

### President's Report

Good Afternoon.

Before I begin with my Presidential update, please join me in a moment of silence for one of our students, Veronica Soto, who passed away over the weekend during an off campus celebration of her 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday. [Silence]

The Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs is holding a memorial service today in the Park Café from 3pm-4pm. Thank you.

Today I would like to begin by recognizing our many accomplishments this academic year. Despite a tight budget, this has been an outstanding year thanks to the hard work and dedication of faculty and staff across campus.

A new Strategic Plan, *Opportunity to Ascend*," was born of a comprehensive process, involving the voices of staff, faculty and students and included a Town Hall meeting. The plan lays out the vision for the College's development through 2022. The plan presents six strategic priorities upon which all of our efforts will be focused: Student Success, Global Engagement, Borough Stewardship, Destination Campus, Scholarship-Driven Education and Resource Management.

In April, we held a special budget retreat to focus on the College's financial situation. Even in times of financial limitations, we are committed to achieving ambitious goals.

In May, the Board of Trustees approved a new Governance Plan, although imperfect, it is a considerable improvement over the prior plan.

The year was marked by outstanding scholarship with many faculty awards as well as faculty and staff recognition. For example, the College points proudly to a faculty member who has won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry and another who has been a finalist for the prize. This is a unique situation, which reflects the College's high quality of scholarship.

Recognition for the College has also come in national rankings including Best Value. In 2018, the College was ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the Top 100 Most Affordable Universities in America;; and, ranked 37<sup>th</sup> for creating opportunities to improve social mobility and earning potential for graduates. It was also proclaimed a Purple Heart Institution, the only one in New York City.

The school's athletic achievements were also notable in 2018. The College won the CUNYAC Commissioner's Cup for outstanding athletic achievement. The men's basketball team and the women's softball team won championships. CSI's Scholar-Athlete of the Year Ewa Wojciechowska was also named the CUNYAC Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year. The College's participation in NCAA Division III athletics is helping us recruit, retain, and graduate some of the best students. Our student athletes graduate faster with higher GPA's than the student body at large. They take the toughest majors and go on to prestigious medical schools, law schools, and graduate programs and work at top firms and serve in the most prestigious not-for-profit organizations. They are our Macaulay and Verrazano honors students and our Valedictorians.

I believe that we are in line with our new strategic plan and will continue on an ascending path.

I am combining my presidential remarks with the report of the Institutional Planning Committee (IPC). In April, the IPC and the College Budget Committee planned and sponsored a Budget Retreat. The retreat focused on two goals: presentation of relatable budget information to the

College community and open discussions focused on budget priorities for next year. The presentation of relatable budget information was helpful in that many who attended felt better equipped to understand the reasons why the College is in its current financial state. With a better understanding, members of the College community can provide informed input and potential solutions to our financial situation. A variety of factors contributed to the College's financial situation. Declines in enrollment resulted in a reduction in resources of \$1 million and cuts in the state budget have decreased resources by \$7.9 million. While there have been increases in other fund sources, they have not been sufficient to offset cost of living increases. Poor collection rates have also affected the College's finances by approximately \$1.5 million. Investment in unsustainable initiatives and hiring of faculty and staff, while most other campuses were cutting back, have also had a negative impact on our budget. But it is also true that the College has been historically underfunded.

Returning the College to sound financial footing is a strategic priority, as indicated in *Opportunity to Ascend*. An improvement in the state's allocation to CUNY will help. While further reductions are not anticipated for next year, it is not clear how much of the anticipated 4 percent increase in funding from the state will trickle down to the campuses. By redirecting resources from lower priority areas to higher priority areas, we will also take a step toward better financial health. Increasing enrollment, particularly in graduate programs and in the number of out-of-state students, will increase funds, too. Similarly, strategic investments for growth at the St. George campus or creation of new degrees will help. Finally, improved collection rates on moneys owed the College would improve the financial situation.

The retreat was successful, with over 100 people in attendance and engaged in rich dialog. There were in-depth presentations on the budget followed by several rounds of tabletop discussions with time for reports from each table.

I, along with Cabinet, the Budget Committee, and the IPC reviewed the comment cards, table summaries and the comments from each table's verbal reports were captured by Professor Lavender during the meeting. All of this material will be soon available to the campus community via Blackboard. I encourage all faculty and staff to get involved in the discussion and provide commentary once the Blackboard site is available.

While it would be impossible to address every issue or idea that came out of the discussion, IPC believes that the majority of comments can be grouped into themes and specific areas for focus in the coming year.

Under the first theme of infrastructure, repairing windows and sidewalks, and focusing on sustainability/green issues were highlighted. One green initiative in particular – developing an irrigation system that uses water from rain barrels connected to new gutters – drew attention.

The second theme was branding. Hiring a new director of communications, focusing on the success of student athletes both on and off the field, expanding and coordinating the use of social media, developing initiatives to position the College as a “Destination Campus,” and improving coordination between communications and design services were primary issues identified.

Another theme was Budget Planning and Resource Management, which is discussed previously in this report.

Refining the College's Enrollment Strategies was another primary theme of the retreat. The College needs to develop metrics for advisement and clarify what constitutes successful advisement.

Community Engagement was the final theme of the discussions.

During early fall, IPC envisions having IPC members co-chair committees on each of these five themes and will invite broader participation much as we did throughout our strategic planning process.

Please review all of the material from the retreat. If you have an interest in serving on one of these committees or if you think something major was left out, please communicate your idea to me or to any member of IPC.

In closing I am pleased that we've made it through a difficult period and I anticipate that working together we will create a better process and better financial foundation for our continued ascent as an institution.

Thank you.