

College Council
President's Remarks
October 18, 2018

Good afternoon.

At our last College Council I addressed some of the financial challenges we and other CUNY colleges are facing this year. We're continuing our discussions with Central, so I don't have additional information to report. While I think it's important to daylight challenges, it's equally important to focus on the positive things that are happening all around campus.

The first is the Provost search and I want to share my excitement about the search and to tell you how I have been promoting our campus to the candidates.

This is one of the most qualified pools that I have seen for an administrative position. There were nearly one hundred applications, which is a high number. The pool was diverse with candidates

serving in leadership roles in some of the best institutions in the country.

I, along with the entire search committee, spent a Saturday and Sunday at a neutral site separately interviewing 10 of the most promising candidates. The committee met first with the candidate and then I had a private conversation with each one. I was not present for the committee's time with the candidates, and only interacted with the committee at the end of the process. The committee recommended that five candidates be invited to ensure a successful search, even if one or two drop out. I had developed my own list independent of the committee and there was a perfect match between my list and theirs.

Drop-outs would not be surprising with a pool this talented – all will have lots of options. We are now in the midst of the campus visits and have already seen two candidates with several more yet to come. Campus visits will be completed by November 2 and I hope to make an offer before Thanksgiving. This puts us ahead of the national cycle.

In my conversations with the candidates at the neutral site and when I visit with them on campus, I champion the College and all of the great things we have going on. All finalists impressed me with the time they had taken to research our campus. Every one mentioned our new strategic plan as one of the reasons for wanting to come here. They were very excited about the campus enthusiasm for *Borough Stewardship* by serving as an anchor institution on Staten Island, of the vision of becoming a *Destination Campus*, and of our brand of *Scholarship Driven-Education*. They also articulated that our plan is unique and stands out in a sea of public institutions with similar missions. Most mentioned that it was encouraging to see *Student Success* first and applauded our priority of *Global Engagement*.

Of course, I don't want to lure someone here under false pretenses. So, I took care to mention *Resource Management* and informed them that we operate with a budget that is challenged. We also work in a highly centralized system. None of the candidates saw these issues as disqualifying. In fact, most have dealings with systems and with states that have been defunding higher education and seem eager to share their skills and experience with us.

I think it's worth mentioning the talking points I've used with the candidates that remind me the College is indeed a uniquely special place. Our 204 acres make the campus the largest institution of higher education – public or private – in the city. It's truly a beautiful campus with enormous potential for continued development. I also mention our faculty and the scholarship it produces, which is, in my opinion, on par with an R1 institution. I point out the College's accolades, which it continues to win from leading analytical outlets – from *US News* to *Forbes* to the *Wall Street Journal* – in addition to those accolades faculty have won. All of the candidates were impressed that a Pulitzer prize-winning poet was on the search committee.

I particularly mentioned the College's accolades for social mobility. Just two weeks ago, *Payscale* ranked us the #28 two-year degree program in *PayScale's College Salary Report*. This was based on early and mid-career salary data from 3.2 million graduates of 2,700 colleges and I'm pleased to tell you that CSI is at the head of its class in the nation for salary. This is a simple but incomplete illustration of the impact we have on our students. Your daily efforts make a difference in lives. I truly believe we change lives, opening new

doors to opportunity and allowing students to develop their skills and talents that allow them to start, build and ultimately enjoy successful careers. These impacts, as the accolades show, are not going unnoticed across the nation.

Our students are the best indication, the most important indication, of our qualities: earlier this year, I tell the candidates, our School of Business students took second place at the American Marketing Association Case competition – out of 100 schools competing. The first place team was from the Wharton School of Business – one of the oldest and best business schools in the country.

The College's research infrastructure is another highlight I share with the candidates. The Imaging center, the Center for the Arts, the Con Edison Trading Room, the in progress MakerSpace Lab, Media Culture Screening Room, and the High Performance Computer are state of the art assets that we are rightfully proud of: they reflect that we are engaged in scholarship that is cutting edge and transformative in many respects.

I also tell the candidates that the College is an integral part of the community it calls home, the Borough of Staten Island. We are an *Anchor Institution*, the borough's second largest employer, and our faculty, staff and students play a role in many aspects of that community's vitality. We provide teachers to the borough's elementary, middle and high schools, we train workers for the health care system and other employees in the community, and through our Tech Incubator we are nurturing start-ups that are sure to provide future jobs that will ensure the Borough continues its robust economic development and growth.

One example of our leadership in the Borough is the debate for the 11th Congressional District that we hosted Tuesday night. I thought it was one of the most interesting in the country and nicely showcased the College. This is a great example that the community is noticing our leadership in hosting serious conversations about difficult topics.

I don't want to downplay the difficult issues we are going to have to grapple with concerning our facilities. But I am confident we are making progress toward addressing them.

I have made this the Lustrum of Infrastructure and am putting keeping our campus safe and nice at the top of my funding priorities for the next five years. We've purchased new mowers and have trained our staff, which will improve the lawn care; our Pool was filled with water earlier this week and in the coming weeks will be filled with swimmers; the hardscape project will be completed by the end of the month with plantings at the entrances of the buildings – creating welcoming and functional entry plazas; we have 35 new light posts on order and have fixed many other areas, such as the outdoor lighting by the tennis courts, that can be repaired instead of replaced. VP Hope Berte is continuing her listening tour to prioritize the issues.

We're conducting interviews to hire a new Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management. This person's first priority will be to work with the campus community in developing an enrollment strategy. But the work needs to start now. We will be clarifying the issues and identifying best practices working in conjunction with Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. This will allow the new AVP to have a head start when he or she starts.

Despite our challenges, I personally believe this is a great time to be at the College of Staten Island. The negative perceptions from the past are simply outdated and based on old ideas long past their “sell-by” dates. Consider recent appointments to key organizations citywide: Cheryl Adolph was appointed to the board of the New York City Economic Development Commission last year; Vice President Ken Iwama was last week named co-chair of the Fresh Kills Alliance; last year, Associate Provost Ralf Peetz was named to the Staten Island Greenbelt Conservancy along with long serving members Professor Catherine Lavender and Professor Alfred Levine; and just last night Bonnie Fritz was selected as president of the same organization. This means that CSI now plays a central role in how our parks are operated.

Almost every day, I hear a story about a student, faculty member, or staff member that reflects a new reality: The College is a leading institution, we are having significant, positive impacts on the thousands of students who come here, and we are helping to improve almost every aspect of life in our community.

Thank you.