

College Council
President's Remarks
September 20, 2018

Good afternoon and welcome. I normally welcome everyone back from the summer but it seems like the start of classes are already in the distant past. But it's great to see everyone back at the College of Staten Island.

At last year's final College Council, I discussed what was a trying year financially and the need to address our infrastructure. The good news is that for FY18 we are projecting a positive year-end balance (CUTRA) of \$72k, just a little less than the \$95k we had been projecting. The bad news is that we had to use over \$1.3M in non-tax levy resources to accomplish this. While our non-tax levy entities exist to support the college this amount is not sustainable in future budgets. For example, Auxiliary Services needs to invest in housing, dining facilities, and repair of rental space, projects they will now have to delay. In the next few minutes, I'm going to discuss the challenges facing us this academic year. There are great things happening at the College

despite these challenges and we must work together to build on our strengths.

Last Spring, I noted that the State budget increased by 4% for senior colleges from the prior year but it remained to be seen how much of the increase would make its way to CSI. As it turns out, we've actually had a decrease in our funding:

- A portion of the resources from the \$200 annual increase in tuition has been used to *help* cover the contractual raises;
- In addition, Senior colleges are being asked to set-aside 2% of available resources for a new collective bargaining agreement. This equates to approximately \$2.5M for CSI. While this is the right thing to do, it will strain our budget.
- Finally, our baseline funding has been reduced by \$1M due to under collections and enrollment decreases.

Last May when I addressed this group I articulated five things that needed to happen for our budget picture to improve.

Unfortunately, the situation remains much the same:

- A return to better state budgets.

- Strategic redirections from lower priority to higher priority areas.
- Enrollment growth, especially graduate and out-of-state.
- Strategic investments for growth like St. George, creation of new graduate degrees, and economic development.
- Collection rates simply need to improve.

I am pushing CUNY to address what I believe to be a structural flaw in their funding model for our operating budget. I can appreciate that you've heard similar messages in the past, but there is reason to think that this year will be different based on the success we've had with the increase in our capital budget and how we are framing our position.

With regards to the Capital budget, we've been making the case that we are a unique campus in CUNY with a requirement to achieve a dual mission of serving associates and baccalaureate/graduate students but with limited resources to maintain our grounds and aging infrastructure. In fact, if we were just viewed as a park, with no educational component,

we'd be one of the largest on the Island with many needs. I'm happy to say that our efforts have partially paid off, and that we've received an additional \$6M in capital funding on top of what was already an initial doubling of last year's plan (about \$12M total). As a reminder we can only use capital funds on construction for capital eligible projects.

This year I am announcing a Lustrum of Infrastructure as I believe deferred maintenance is one of the most pressing issues facing the campus. New buildings will do us no good if we can't maintain our existing facilities. This year we will continue with the front entrances to the buildings and continued renovation of 2M and will start on projects to replace the sidewalks, address flooding issues in 1M, our physical plant building as well as in 6S, our science building. We are getting closer to breaking ground on a new substation. These projects are critical to helping create a Destination Campus. Unfortunately, many of our problems like sewage, plumbing, and leaks are not capital eligible and have to be funded out of our OTPS operating budget.

Because Hope will be speaking to you in a few minutes, I want to briefly touch on why I felt the need to appoint an interim VP of Facilities. Last year, I separated the responsibilities of the VP of Finance and Administration, believing we needed better checks and balances on the power that comes with that position. A VP in a combined role, is able to make decisions to cover budget holes by putting off maintenance with the good intention of addressing it in the next year. By splitting the position, I sought to daylight such decisions by having a single voice focused on keeping our facilities safe and pleasant.

The exposure revealed that we need to address years of deferred maintenance and poor management of planned projects that simply died on the vine.

In the coming year I'll also be looking to improve the lighting on Campus and a modern upgrade to our existing security system as part of our infrastructure improvements.

Returning back to the operating budget, our strategy is to focus on addressing our historical underfunding through presentation of comparative funding between CSI with Senior and Community Colleges throughout the University. I'm hopeful we'll have the success we had in getting additional funding for the Capital budget. Associate Provost Ralf Peetz and CFO Carlos Serrano have worked on the analysis demonstrating the flaw in the funding model. They will be discussing their findings with the budget committee and I will be sharing their findings with CUNY.

Even if I am successful though, it is important that we make changes to how we handle our operations and our budget. We are now in the process of formulating our FY19 budget. Gary and Carlos have been working with the Budget Committee on formulating strategies and helping to craft our communication to the central office. We have also been trying to work in suggestions from last spring's retreat.

We've already acted on a number of those recommendations. We hired Joe Lamport as Director of Communications so that

we can work on our branding. I know Joe has been making the rounds going on a listening tour.

We are now in a better position to promote our amazing faculty accomplishments, which has led to the College's recognition in the last three weeks as one of the nations top institutions by *US News, Forbes, and Wall Street Journal*. We'll also be able to shine a brighter spotlight on funding for exciting projects like the 1.35M we received for the new Makerspace lab.

Besides the communications position, we're in the midst of a search for the position of AVP of Enrollment, and we're moving forward with the suggestion that we repair the sidewalks.

Additionally, we've made personnel changes in the Registrar's Office and in Academic Advisement.

We're also addressing our underperformance in Collections. This summer we acted to deregister students with outstanding balances of \$750 or more through three deregistration's. We're looking at other measures that could improve our operations in

the Bursar's office. Additionally, Financial Aid staff connected with all incoming students to explain their financial responsibilities as well as assisting as many people as possible with as many options as possible to pay. This significant investment of time combined with de-registrations will help establish a culture of on-time payment.

Regarding management of resources we changed our loop bus schedule, which will help us save approximately \$300k and are evaluating other suggestions made at last spring's budget retreat.

These steps are just the beginning. This year the IPC will be following through on the 5 areas identified in last year's retreat:

- Infrastructure
- Branding
- Budget Planning and Resource Management
- Enrollment Strategies
- Community Engagement

Working together, we will identify improvements that we can make independent of any assistance we get from Central. At the end of this process, which, at times may be difficult, I believe we will be a better institution, strongly positioned to continue our ascent.