

December 9, 2022

Colleagues:

What an eventful week! On Saturday I was pleased and proud to welcome over a hundred of our closest supporters to our first in-person fundraiser, the Celestial Ball, since 2019. It was great to see so many old friends (including Drs. Bill and Bonnie Fritz) and to make new ones! The evening was a great opportunity to see the impact that the College of Staten Island plays in the lives of our students, and the role that the campus enjoys in the larger community. Many thanks to the team in the Office of Institutional Advancement (and elsewhere) who made this event so special, and I look forward to reviewing the records to see how much we raised in support of our students. Later in the week, that team assisted as we unveiled the official portrait of my predecessor in the “Hall of Presidents” and as we dedicated a number of benches that were purchased by Drs. Bill and Bonnie Fritz and by CSI alumni Dr. Michael Nakao and his wife Katherine McDonnell. It is always gratifying to hear of the impact that this institution has on individual lives and to see that impact repaid with generosity and philanthropy.

On Monday my staff met with our newly elected state Senator, Jessica Scarcella-Spanton, a proud CSI alum, to discuss ways in which she and her administration can best advocate for our needs in legislative sessions. As the only institution of public higher education in the borough, we enjoy widespread support from both sides of the political aisle, and we must leverage that relationship to our benefit. Conversations that I had this week with Assemblyman Mike Cusick, Councilmembers Mike Reilly, and Joe Borelli, and State Senator Andrew Lanza show just how committed we are to ensuring that our elected officials are more than just allies in name, but are aware of the strengths (and needs) of CSI and CUNY. This was seen in full effect on Thursday, at a press conference where it was announced that CSI would receive over half a million dollars to support workforce development as it relates to the offshore wind industry. This is just the beginning: many of those in attendance pledged their support for academic programs that would position CSI as *\*the\** leading educational institution in this exciting space, and I look forward to making this vision a reality.

The week also brought meeting with the leadership of the College Council and the Faculty Senate, where interim Provost Steiper and I met with our colleagues to answer questions and set the agenda for next week’s meetings. We also had a lovely luncheon with new faculty members hosted by the Center for Global Engagement, and it was great to learn so much about our colleagues in an informal and relaxed setting. I also had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Institutional Planning Committee to discuss our strategic planning process and lay the ground work for important work that will soon commence. There is much that we can do to better position our campus for initiatives moving forward and these meetings, with a demonstrated commitment to shared governance and transparency, can help us do just that.

On Wednesday I attended an all-day Council of President's meeting, where we discussed issues related to campus reopening, COVID protocols, and the looming CUNY budget submission (that will be voted on at Monday's Board meeting). It was a frank and at times painful conversation about the state of higher education in general, and of public higher ed in particular. With enrollment down and likely to remain flat, we must concentrate on developing new pipelines of students and, perhaps more importantly, retaining those whom we attract to CSI. This is the largest issue affecting our financial situation, and we must do all that we can to recruit, engage, and retain students to CSI. While Wednesday's meeting was unpleasant, that which occurred on Thursday was much more enjoyable, as we honored those employees (400+) who achieved milestones of service to the campus. The convocation of the college was a wonderful opportunity to gather together, to share memories of times (and colleagues) past, and to then celebrate the approach of the holiday season with a reception. Many, many thanks to those whom we recognized and to those who made the event so special.

Until next time,



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