



March 22, 2024

Colleagues:

I hope this note finds you well. As the calendar turns to spring, I write with information and updates that you may find of interest. What a week it has been! As I am sure many of you saw (["Congressmember Malliotakis Secures \\$2.9 Million for College of Staten Island STEM Lab Development" | CSI Today](#)), on Monday we welcomed Congressmember Nicole Malliotakis to campus, as she announced an award of nearly \$3M to support several dozen upgrades to our STEM facilities. I am incredibly proud to have worked with the Central Office to develop this request, and look forward to the amazing results of this transformational gift, which will result in significant upgrades to our Biology, Chemistry, Engineering and Environmental Science, Mathematics, Nursing, and Physics facilities. Many thanks to Robert Wallace and Michael Steiper of the administration for their efforts in identifying needs and securing these funds. During her visit, the Congressperson met many of our faculty, administrators, and students, and relayed her personal intent to return for a ribbon-cutting once the work is finalized. This investment in CSI and our students will dramatically impact our recruitment, retention, and student success (and faculty research!) metrics.

Later in the week, we received the equally welcome news that the College received \$1.7M in funding as a result of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's earmark, which was also supported by Senator Charles Schumer. This grant supports academic and job development initiatives and places the College at the center of local, regional, and national conversations dealing with climate science. We are appreciative of this support and investment, and in the recognition of the College as a true engine of economic activity. We anticipate hosting the Senators for a visit and press announcement in the coming weeks!

Sticking with exciting science news, on Tuesday, the campus [hosted a large gathering](#) of community partners and students for an event that focused on the skies. More than 300 individuals attended the "Reaching for the Stars" gathering, where they learned about astronomy and astrophysics from Professor Charles Liu (who recently received the American Astronomical Society's top Education Prize, (["Charles Liu Wins Prestigious AAS Education](#)

[Prize” | \*CSI Today\*](#)) and witnessed a variety of planetary and interstellar phenomena at the CSI Observatory. As CSI has the City’s largest publicly accessible observatory, we are a natural setting for such events—and we intend to make important improvements in that facility this summer, so that by the fall term, our students and others can once again avail themselves of this dynamic teaching and learning tool. Many thanks to Professor Liu, Emeritus Professor Irving Robbins, and Dean Ralf Peetz for spearheading this initiative.

That same day, I had the pleasure of participating in a “President’s Fireside Chat” as part of CUNY’s Women’s Conference Week, a weeklong celebration in honor of Women’s History Month. Presidents Larry Johnson (Guttman CC), Frank Wu (Queens College), and I engaged in free-wheeling conversation with Dean Graciela Mochkofsky (Craig Newark Graduate School of Journalism) to discuss how we can support our female students, faculty, staff, and administrators. We shared personal stories of women who influenced us and discussed how we strive to elevate and amplify the contributions of our female colleagues. Together with other events (including a day of community activism and service, and a panel led by our own AVP and CIO Patty Kahn) the week was a tremendous acknowledgment and celebration of female contributions to CUNY and to academia. I am proud to have played a small role in this.

On Wednesday, I hosted an in-person meeting of the CSI Foundation Board, where we discussed plans for our [Annual Benefit, “Spring Into Giving,”](#) welcomed new board members, and assessed the impact of campus food pantry operations. We also reviewed financial reports, discussed portfolio performance, approved a pair of sizable bequests, and heard from Student Government President Luke Katz about how his team and the administration have partnered on important campus projects. It was an excellent example of shared governance and collective work to enhance the student experience and improve all areas of campus operations. Speaking of shared governance, the next day, I participated in both the monthly College Council and Faculty Senate meetings, where we shared information related to our budget situation, plans for Commencement exercises, and about faculty research, scholarship, and creative activities. We also heard about current and planned IT projects, proposals from Student Government, and about proposals from CUNY’s Office of Academic Affairs.

The week ended with another lobbying session (with Councilmember David Carr) and with our campus hosting the third annual CUNY LGBTQIA+ Conference, where I made introductory remarks and welcomed dozens of attendees, including several notable panelists and presenters. I had the opportunity to attend some of the breakout sessions, and learned more about how we can champion the causes of inclusivity and belongingness at CSI and beyond. It was a poignant reminder of how far we have come as a system and as a society, but also of the hard, important work that lies ahead. I am sure that you will join me in seeing that to a successful conclusion.

As tomorrow begins Purim and next week brings Easter, my weekly message will be on hiatus...but I wish all who celebrate happy and healthy holidays with family and loved ones.

Until next time,



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