



April 19, 2024

Colleagues:

On Monday, we hosted the annual CUNY Board of Trustees borough hearing, where we hosted several members of the Chancellery and a comparable number of Trustees, some of whom toured our campus, saw its challenges, and commented on its potential. We also listened to testimony from several dozen speakers who advocated for increased funding for the system and our campus, expressed gratitude for recent infusions of Congressional support, and shared their concerns about ongoing delays with contract negotiations. I appreciated the candor of the conversations and will continue to work on behalf of our campus and the CUNY system. That day also brought the welcome news that our Teacher's Education Honors Academy secured a grant for a total intended amount in excess of one million dollars to further the transformative work that program does to educate and train future STEM teachers.

Congratulations on a well-deserved recognition of the important work that you are doing on behalf of STEM education! The day also brought word of Professor Sarah Holmes (Psychology) being named a recipient of the Henry Wasser Award for Outstanding Research by an Associate Professor. Congratulations on your recognition by CUNY!

Tuesday saw a great workshop and training provided by the New York City Commission on Human Rights "Understanding Muslim Experiences and Combating Anti-Muslim Bias," which fits well with our institutional commitment to celebrating diversity, fostering inclusion, and centering equity. It was wonderful to see so many in attendance, and to hear firsthand about the experiences of so many of our valued community members. More importantly, it was great to learn strategies about how to recognize anti-Muslim racism, support Muslim practices, and learn to be not just an ally but an advocate for justice and dignity. It was a poignant lesson in how far we still need to move as a society, and as individuals. Stay tuned for information about Upstander training coming to the campus in early May, which will teach people to safely intervene when there is an act of bias and hate.

On Wednesday, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Giovanni da Verrazzano's sailing into New York Harbor (remember I am a maritime historian!), I attended the monthly Council of President's meeting where the agenda included discussions related to ongoing issues with financial aid

filing, efforts related to fundraising and advancement (including the inaugural “CUNY on the Hill” event slated for early next month), and updates related to public safety, legal affairs, and audit activity. It was a very full agenda but one that shed light on a number of very important initiatives. That same day saw the *U.S. News and World Report* release its rankings of top graduate programs nationwide, with CSI gaining recognition for its programs in Nursing and Physical Therapy. Congratulations to all who make such accolades possible! We also hosted the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office annual “Stand Up. Stop Bullying” event which was very successful, and another example of how important the College is to the community.

Thursday was a busy day on campus and off. In addition to the monthly College Council and Faculty Senate meetings, where we discussed the state of the campus and system budgets, we also participated in Denim Day where the campus community wore denim to show solidarity with sexual survivors and held our “Spring into Giving” annual benefit at the Richmond County Country Club. Joined by 200 of our closest friends and supporters, we feted three honorees: alumnus and President & CEO of Richmond University Medical Center Dr. Daniel Messina; alumna and Executive Director of the National Lighthouse Museum Linda Dianto; and Richmond County Public Administrator Edwina Martin. The evening demonstrated not just how central CSI is to the local community, but how valuable we are as partners on Staten Island, and how valued we are as integral members of the Borough. The event raised awareness of the many good things we are doing here, and of the brightness of our future. Many thanks to Interim Executive Director of Institutional Advancement Cheryl Adolph and her team for their hard work in making this among our most successful fund-and-friend-raising events.

The week ended with a meeting of the Institutional Planning Committee, where we discussed our developing Strategic Plan, as well as curricular modifications related to Nursing and Social Work. We also brainstormed about challenges related to transportation and infrastructure, as well as campus culture and climate. To that last point, I hope that many of you were able to enjoy this week’s full slate of “Spirit Week” festivities, including the carnival (although I chickened out of participating in the dunk tank!), food trucks, athletic contests, and a campus-wide door decorating contest. The week’s activities would not have been possible but for the dedicated leadership of Carol Brower, who is retiring today from her position as Director of Student Life after 30 years at CSI. Thank you, Carol, for all that you have done for our campus and especially for our students, and good luck in whatever the future holds!

Next week brings our spring break and a hiatus from this message. I want to wish a joyful and Happy Passover to all who celebrate, and to acknowledge that next week also marks Administrative Professionals Day. We will be recognizing our colleagues in the Gittleson titles with a small breakfast gathering on the 25<sup>th</sup>, as a gesture of gratitude for the work they do each and every day. Thank you to all, especially, Rosemary Vitale!

Until next time,



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