



May 3, 2024

Colleagues:

As the calendar turns to May and as we enter Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, I hope this note finds you well. I know many of us were away from campus for Spring Break and I trust you have returned with a renewed sense of energy and purpose as we enter the home stretch of our academic year.

The week was a tumultuous one for higher education, and CUNY is not immune from these challenges. With tensions understandably high, we were nonetheless able to conduct our routine business operations and make preparations for the remaining few weeks of the spring semester. On Monday evening, I attended a pair of CUNY Board of Trustee committee meetings where, among other things, our honorary degree recipient, Rear Admiral Zeita Merchant, USCG, was approved for recognition (read more about Rear Admiral Merchant [here](#)). RADM Merchant will be joined on the dais and speaking platform by this year's Valedictorian Laura Kaplan (BS in Computer Science and Mathematics), and Salutatorian Kai White (BA in English), chosen from among a number of highly qualified nominees. Congratulations to all of this year's honorees!

On Tuesday, I delivered welcoming remarks to the Mayor's Small Business Resource Fair, where dozens of local entrepreneurs learned about the resources available to them via the Small Business Development Center, the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce (with whom we are celebrating 50 years of partnership!), and other agencies. It was a powerful reminder of the role that the College plays in the local community, and a testament to the impact that we have beyond our campus. That afternoon, I met with outgoing Student Government President Luke Katz to discuss year-end projects, summer initiatives, and transition plans as he prepares to graduate. Luke has been a tremendous partner and I am sure he will make us proud as an alumnus—our incoming SGA President, Adrian Rosales, has big shoes to fill, indeed!

The week also saw significant displays of student accomplishment. On Wednesday, I met with several students from the Department of Engineering and Environmental Science (EES) to discuss their experiences, particularly as they relate to applied learning activities and

internships in those majors. As part of CUNY's Inclusive Economy Initiative, EES majors receive immersive, hands-on experience and regularly interact with career advisors and industry liaisons. This allows for immersive real-world opportunities that allow them to link their theoretical learning with practical applications. Many thanks to Chairperson Neo Antoniadis and Industrial Advisor Nicole Bagliore for the invitation to meet our students and learn from their experiences. The following day, I attended one of the highlights of our academic year, our annual Undergraduate Conference on Research, Scholarship, and the Arts. With poster presentations representing 20 academic departments, an art and music exposition, and film screenings and poetry readings, it is clear that student research, scholarship, and creative activity is alive and well at the College of Staten Island. I was amazed by not just the quantity but even more by the quality of the work on display, and appreciate the effort that went into producing what we saw. Our students are second to none, but their accomplishments would not be possible but for the mentorship and guidance of their faculty mentors: undergraduate research is a key component to student success, and to our retention and enrollment efforts. Many thanks to all who made this event such a success, especially the Office of the Associate Provost under the leadership of Laxmi Ramasubramanian!

My week ended with a series of meetings with Central Office and local college governance leaders. The events of the past several days have been all-consuming (involving several meetings each day) and concerning: keeping clear and open lines of communication with our partners at CUNY and with one another is a main determinant in keeping our campus not just functional but safe. I appreciate the hard work of our Public Safety team in doing that, and your own partnership in ensuring that our campus remains one marked by civility and mutual respect. Thank you for making CSI a destination where all feel included, valued, and welcomed.

Until next time, and with wishes for a Blessed Orthodox Easter for those who celebrate,



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