

May 20, 2022

Colleagues:

This week marked a solemn occasion for the nation as we surpassed one million COVID fatalities. On Tuesday, in commemoration of that milestone and in remembrance of all those members of the CUNY community who succumbed to the pandemic, there was a moving ceremony at the Great Hall on The City College on New York campus. Members of the Chancellery, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and many presidents, deans, and other administrators gathered to reflect on the fact that no system of higher education was more deeply or profoundly impacted by the pandemic than ours. CSI, of note, had a disproportionate number of staff fall to the disease, so the ceremony carried a particular poignancy for me and I am sure, for all of you. Although I have been here just five months, I can sense a deep and almost familial connection that many of you have for (y)our colleagues and coworkers.

With just one week remaining before our Commencement activities, I thought it opportune to reflect on my first semester at the College of Staten Island. As I shared at Tuesday's Town Hall, I have been deeply impressed by the commitment to the access mission of our campus and University, and by how passionate folks are to see CSI remain as a springboard for social mobility. While challenges certainly exist (enrollment, retention, budgetary uncertainty, structural deficits) and we have no intention of ignoring them, it is also important to accentuate the positive and emphasize the many, many good things that we are doing on this campus, on a daily basis, in support of our students. For example, on Monday there was an Athletics Program golf outing that aimed to raise funds for our student-athletes. But as often happens with such events, the social networking that occurred resulted in more than wallets and checkbooks being opened: the conversations on the course and in the clubhouse revealed a strong willingness on the part of local community partners to offer opportunities for ALL of our students to participate in internships, apprenticeships, and other workplace-based applied learning activities. This is notable because just this week our campus was designated one of the top 50 in the nation at providing experiential learning opportunities for students. As the Chancellor has indicated pathways to the world of work as one of his top administrative priorities, we are well-poised to lead the way in this important and innovative initiative.

Thursday's College Council and Faculty Senate meetings revealed continued concerns about staffing, fiscal uncertainty, return-to-campus protocols, and associated operational issues. They also featured, as did Tuesday's Town Hall, philosophical conversations about the future of CSI and what kind of institution we are and should be. I look forward to ongoing dialog about such issues, which will surely inform our College's forthcoming strategic planning efforts, and which will be predicated on our institutional commitments to shared governance, communication, transparency, and accountability.

My week included various meetings with the Board of Trustees, several CUNY administrators (including individual conversations with the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management, the University's Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Information Officer, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and the Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost), and with members of our own Student Affairs team. The latter were among my favorites (apologies to the Trustees!)

since they allowed me to learn more about the day-to-day operations of key staffers who regularly interface with and advocate for our students. Again, I was impressed with the level of commitment, of engagement, and of what I would describe as a “culture of caring” on display. This mindset comes from the top, so I want to acknowledge the leadership of Vice President Borrero for setting a tone of “customer service” that extends to the staff, and which is on display long after classes have concluded, but when students are still in need our services. Thank you, all.

As final exams are in full swing and our preparations for Commencement activities wind down, I urge all of you to take good care as yet another wave of COVID infections appears on the horizon.

I also want to take this opportunity to announce and congratulate this year’s [Dolphin Award recipients](#). It is so nice to see a group of faculty, staff, and students recognized by their peers for their great work and achievements. I am very much looking forward to next week’s events and seeing many of you at graduation.

Until then,



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