

May 6, 2022

Colleagues:

As the calendar turns to May and we enter Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month, it is important to acknowledge the contributions of members of the AAPI community, while recognizing the barriers that exist to their fuller inclusion in our society and within higher education. Although AAPI are often viewed as a “model minority” which has achieved success in greater proportion to their numbers, a more nuanced appreciation of the differences between, among, and within this growing ethnicity reveals stark contrasts and the need to support each other in the face of growing hostility and anti-Asian violence. CUNY and CSI remain steadfast in their support for all members of our community to live free from discrimination and hate. To that end, we welcome Interim Chief Diversity Officer and Title IX Coordinator Victoria Ajibade, who was hired after Catherine Ferrara’s departure, while we conduct searches to fill the vacant positions in the Office of Diversity and Compliance.

This week I had the pleasure of meeting with the Library Committee, thanks to an invitation by Chief Librarian/Associate Dean Amy Stempler. (As an aside, Associate Dean Stempler was an honoree at Sunday’s annual Hillel Club event, which returned to in-person activity after a two-year hiatus. Although I was unable to attend, I did send greetings and remarks, acknowledging the good work that this organization does on behalf of all our students.) At the Library Committee meeting, it was good to hear the vision that Associate Dean Stempler has for her department, one that includes a reimagining of the physical and virtual spaces that the library occupies. As the true intellectual hub of campus, offering support and resources for students and staff alike, the Library plays a crucial role in advancing our academic and social missions and I am happy to support it in any way that I can. Later that day, I also participated in the quarterly meeting of the CSI Foundation’s Finance Committee, where we discussed recent market performance, analyzed future prospects, and adjusted our portfolio allocations accordingly. The Foundation is integral to the success of our institution, and its annual “Celestial Ball” gala, which will also return to in-person status this December, is but one example of the work that this group of committed advocates does to further the mission of CSI.

I also had the opportunity to continue to tour our lovely Willowbrook campus, getting a behind-the-scenes look at our enhanced Virtual Reality room. Thanks to the hard work of our IT team, our students can participate in and benefit from the latest technology in a variety of ways. From practicing public speaking, to experiencing the world through the eyes of others (for example, a simulated “color blind” scenario builds empathy and understanding for those with disabilities), and to “operating” in virtual healthcare environments, our students experience a unique teaching and learning facility, which can serve as both a recruitment and retention tool. Speaking of recruitment and retention, on Wednesday AVP Alex Scott presented on the work of his team as it relates to growing our student numbers: the pandemic has seriously affected college enrollment nationwide, but we are actively responding and proactively seeking new sources of students to CSI.

My week also included a meeting with (y)our representatives from the Professional Staff Congress (PSC). As a former Vice President for, and statewide representative to, a faculty union, I value the role and perspective of my colleagues and appreciate the opportunity to discuss issues with them in a frank, but constructive manner. I want to especially acknowledge the partnership of Chairperson George Emilio Sanchez, who is stepping down from his role after many years of service, and trust that his successor will carry on the legacy of collegiality and advocacy that I have enjoyed from Professor Sanchez over the past several months.

With only a few weeks remaining in the term, I encourage all of you to get outside and enjoy some fresh air and sunshine during the hectic days leading up to graduation. The work is heavy, the laborers few, but the reward immense.

Until next time, and wishing a Happy Mother's Day to those among us...



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