

August 19, 2022

Colleagues:

What an eventful week! As the campus prepares for the return of students—move-in at Dolphin Cove begins early next week, and classes commence next Thursday—it is exciting to see increased presence and activity on our campus. As the chancellor announced last week, most staff will be on campus a minimum of 70% for the balance of the calendar year, and I know we will continue to provide first-class services to our students and other stakeholders, whether here or in virtual formats. I truly appreciate the efforts that have gone into remote work, and the commitment to serving our students and each other in the best ways possible. As we move back to more on-campus work, we must continue to provide the best customer service to our students in order to give them the best possible experience, and keeping that in mind, it is important that all offices have personnel present to greet visitors and to assist as needed.

This week I met with Vice Chancellor for Advancement James Gallo to discuss strategies to develop and enhance our institutional fundraising initiatives. We spoke about donor cultivation, development of prospects, and the “rules of engagement” that define the philanthropic relationship between the campus and the central office. It was good to hear his thoughts and perspective and gain insight into a complex and complicated situation. I also attended an event in midtown to celebrate and recognize those CUNY donors who have established scholarships and other opportunities for our students, and spoke to many who are committed to enhancing their support. Of note, I also had conversations with members of our own staff who have been successful in securing grants that provide opportunities for workplace based learning, for “upskilling” via microcredentials and industry-recognized certifications, and in other areas that are sure to attract and retain students to our campus. These are important initiatives and I look forward to hearing similar success stories in the near future!

We also welcomed Interim VP Michel Hodge to the Dolphin family this week. As VP for Student Affairs and Strategic Initiatives—and as “the most experienced enrollment management professional in the system”—Michel will be responsible for spearheading efforts related to recruitment and retention. Given Michel’s extensive background in enrollment management, I have transferred those operations from the office of Academic Affairs to VP Hodge’s portfolio. Speaking of moves, I have also brought the entire Student Affairs team to the fourth floor of the (1A) administration building, in a hoped-for sign that students and their advocates are always welcome on the same floor as the president. It is an admittedly small, but hopefully impactful, gesture.

You no doubt saw the news that St. John’s University has announced plans to close its Staten Island campus, effective Spring 2024. I have had several lengthy conversations with their

president and know that his decision was not arrived at lightly. The impact on the local higher education landscape is yet to be determined, but as the only institution of public higher education on the island we have an opportunity—and more importantly, an obligation—to assist those students, faculty, and staff who were disrupted by this news. In consultation with Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Strategies Reine Sarmiento, we have developed a strategy to welcome many SJUSI students to our campus this coming year, with a plan to attract an even larger percentage of such students in the future. I also think that this news serves as a reminder that in times of enrollment crisis, we need to be creative and nimble when it comes to our academic offerings, students experience, and customer service so that we attract and retain as large a market share of students as possible.

Next week I will be hosting colleagues from some of the CUNY community colleges to discuss transfer initiatives, articulation agreements, and the establishment of pipelines to our programs. I am also looking forward to seeing many of you at the “Welcome Back BBQ” on Wednesday, and the start of the academic year on Thursday. I am always excited by the start of the term and what it means for our students, and am optimistic about what the coming term brings.

Until next time, TGL



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