

February 4, 2022

Colleagues:

What a week! It was great to see so many of our students, faculty, and staff back on the beautiful CSI campus in numbers not realized for nearly two years—the excitement that ordinarily accompanies the start of a new term was amplified by the fact that this semester represents a huge step on the road to normalcy, as more than 2/3 of our academic offerings are fully in-person. All instructional and office spaces meet or exceed minimum guidelines for occupancy, and our campus planning, facilities, and operations teams have been hard at work preparing the campus for your return. This enthusiasm for getting back on campus could not even be hampered by a weekend snowstorm—and many thanks to our dedicated teams in Facilities and Public Safety for keeping our campus safe and accessible—nor the challenges associated with accessing campus amid technological and other SNAFUs. The College of Staten Island is back, and we are open for business!

As the calendar turns to February, we also acknowledge a pair of important cultural milestones. First, a Happy Lunar New Year to those who celebrate: for a short time, at least, I am willing to have this be the Year of the Tiger and not that of the Dolphin! Additionally, we now recognize Black History Month, a time when we can reflect not only on the contributions of Africans and African Americans, but also reflect on this nation's legacy of racial injustice and the ongoing campaign for equity and inclusion. To that end, I encourage you to participate in any of the planned activities highlighted here: <https://csitoday.com/2022/02/black-history-month-programming-february-2022/>

Additionally, the College Diversity Council has been engaged in research, assessment, and analysis related to racial equity, social justice, belonging, and inclusion on our campus, and is making recommendations for how we can advance on these important initiatives. I look forward to working with them and others on their proposals.

On Monday, we launched our first in a planned series of “[CSI Today Talks Podcasts](#)” and I encourage you to check them out --along with the newly remodeled [CSI Today Website](#)--for important information and for general-interest stories. I was the “special guest” for the inaugural installment: many thanks to our superb team in Communications and Marketing for making me look and sound good, and for putting the campus on a solid foundation when it comes to branding and recognition!

That evening, I participated in the first Board of Trustees meeting of the year and followed that up with a private conversation with administrators from the other comprehensive and senior colleges. We discussed vaccine mandates, reopening plans, and assorted other topics, and consulted one another as to best practices and pitfalls to avoid. It was a wonderful learning experience.

On Wednesday, I participated in a full-day meeting with the Chancellery as part of the monthly “Council of Presidents” gathering, where we discussed issues related to enrollment, course modality, online programming, and our lobbying and fundraising strategies moving into the future. It is always good to hear of common concerns, and to confer with others on a variety of matters.

I’ve continued to meet as many of my new colleagues as possible, and this week included pleasant and productive conversations with our Honors programs (Macaulay and Verrazzano), the department chairs, and a number of individual faculty and staff members. I also continued my ongoing engagement with representatives from various collective bargaining units and with faculty and staff governance leaders. These conversations continue to demonstrate a commitment to our institutional Mission and the students whom we serve. On Friday, I closed my week by meeting several local elected officials as the kickoff to our annual “Legislative Forum” where we presented major accomplishments and celebrated our achievements, spoke candidly about our challenges and opportunities, and solicited their ongoing (and enhanced!) support for all that we do here. Such efforts will continue in the coming weeks with in-person and virtual conversations with a number of state legislators. It is clear that CSI has a deep and abiding impact far beyond our campus and I look forward to working with our neighbors and colleagues to advance our shared vision for recovery.

I appreciate the feedback on these weekly updates and am committed to maintaining an open line of communication, to the extent that my schedule allows. To that end, we are planning an upcoming town hall where selected administrators and others will be available to answers questions related to COVID-19, the budget and enrollment, the state of the College...or just about any other topic that might be raised. More information will be forthcoming when the details are ironed out.

Until next time, and with profound thanks for all that you are doing to keep CSI safe and open for our students,

TGL



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