

March 4, 2022

Colleagues:

As we enter March—Women’s History Month—I remain active and engaged in learning as much as possible about the campus and those whom we serve. To that end, I attended the new exhibit in the CSI Center for the Arts (“I Like Feminism and Feminism Likes Me”) and stopped by the Bertha Harris Women’s Center to see firsthand the good work that they are doing, this month and throughout the year. As a devoted father of two daughters, I find the work of such offices not just important, but vital to creating a campus climate that is welcoming and inviting. I am heartened, too, to see the large number of women leaders—administrators, chairpersons, faculty governance, and others—who are prominent at CUNY generally, and at CSI, in particular.

This week, I was fortunate to spend time at CSI-St. George, where I met with AVP Alex Scott, Academic Coordinator Dr. Katie Cumiskey, and Site Director Mario D’Alessandro. We had honest and candid conversations about how we can leverage that location to the betterment of our students, and as a potential revenue-generating engine. The high-traffic location is ideal, and the facility is pristine: there is clear potential here, and we should have a comprehensive and cohesive strategy to maximize that potential. I look forward to the important conversations about this moving forward.

That same day, I had an equally compelling conversation with Dr. Stephen Ferst, Director of the Center for Global Engagement (CGE). Like CSI-St. George, the CGE is potential-rich, but the campus needs to identify how we can support such entities—and maximize the benefits of such support—during difficult financial times. The conversation surfaced many ideas (and more than a few challenges) but was another in a series of frank discussions about what the College of Staten Island can and should be doing to reach our full potential.

Tuesday also marked the first of a spring series of Town Hall meetings: this installment focused on the upcoming Middle States reaccreditation visit. It is clear that much collaborative and consultative work went into writing the self-study and building out the evidence to support that narrative. While there are likely issues that we need to address, I am sure that the accreditors will recognize the many good things we are doing here at CSI. The long and eventful day ended with a conference call involving all the presidents of CUNY’s senior colleges, where we discussed—inter alia—budgetary conditions, plans for commencement activities, and various marketing and recruitment initiatives.

Speaking of budget, I have asked our Finance team to prioritize supplemental OTPS (other than personnel expenses) requests that focus on enhancing student success, building enrollment, and providing support for faculty and staff. While it is not possible to fund every need, I am hopeful that we can satisfy many high-priority items, including increased support for faculty research, new lab equipment for students, enhanced campus technology for all, and needed improvements in campus infrastructure.

On Wednesday, I attended an all-day Council of President’s meeting at CUNY Central, where I participated in a data-driven transfer exercise, discussed lobbying strategies, analyzed enrollment metrics, and learned how to best approach the Fall 2022 term amid ever-changing public health

directives. It was good to hear of shared pain, although that is cold comfort, and of how other campuses are dealing with myriad issues. I intend to share these best practices and innovations with appropriate parties at CSI. That night, I participated in a CSI Foundation Board Executive Committee meeting, where we prepped for an upcoming full Board meeting (March 15). The generous support that the Foundation provides to our campus is matched only by the enthusiasm of its members: it is good to have friends such as these!

The week concluded with my usual one-on-ones with senior staff, conversations with local and state elected officials, meetings with regional businesses seeking to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with the College, and with CUNY officials, who are desirous of enhancing their support for some of our well-established programs. The overall result of all these conversations reveals that CSI is held in high regard by those within and beyond our immediate community, and that we should leverage our reputation to best position ourselves for continued and ongoing support. I am hopeful that these conversations will not just plant the seed, but result in a bountiful harvest from which we can all benefit. I am ready to do the hard, important work that is required and to continuously advocate for what we need to do our jobs as best we can.

Until next time,

TGL

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