

April 15, 2022

Colleagues:

As we approach the middle of the month, I write with my weekly update. This past weekend, I attended the CUNY caucus in Albany, where I and other administrators from across the system lobbied about, and showed our appreciation for, the looming state budget. While there, we learned of its passage and enactment, and the results are good for higher education in general, and for CUNY in particular. The budget shows an increased level of funding to campuses, the elimination of the “tap gap,” expansion of aid for part-time students and incarcerated persons, money for faculty and staff hires, and critical aid for capital and infrastructure needs. Although the details are still being analyzed, it is clear that this is the best budget we have had in many, many years and I want to thank all those who lent their support to the process of getting it passed. Jasmine Cardona and Rob Wallace deserve special recognition, as they coordinated numerous meetings with local and state elected officials, and attended many sessions to prepare me for the same.

Even after the caucus, there was still work to be done this past weekend: on Saturday evening and again on Sunday, I participated in the closing activities for the CUNY Leadership Institute, a program that links established administrators with aspirants to such roles. We discussed myriad plans and proposals, and established a network of forward-thinkers who are well-positioned to advance many initiatives for CUNY. Both Provost Parrish and I had mentees, although I think he would agree that we learned as much from them as they did from us! The present rosy picture for CUNY is matched only by its bright future!

The workweek brought my usual meetings, including one with the Presidents of the member institutions in the East Coast Athletic Conference, and with my senior college counterparts, where we discussed issues related to the rise in antisemitism and anti-Asian violence in our city and beyond. It was an illuminating set of conversations, particularly as they came on the cusp of the tragic subway shooting on Tuesday. CUNY remains steadfast in its denunciation of racism and intolerance of any kind, and that is as true at CSI as it is anywhere else in the system. We must strive to create a community of caring and of inclusivity, where our differences and our diversity bring strength and opportunity.

The following day, I hosted Borough President Vito Fossella and members of his staff to our Willowbrook campus. We toured several facilities, met with faculty and students, and came away impressed by the level of activity that we witnessed. Among other stops, we visited the Imaging Facility, Marine Biology Labs, the site of the future Makerspace, and our Dolphin Cove dormitory. We even stopped by the Campus Center for a bit to chat with those who were behind our Spirit Week festivities, which have been extremely well-received by our students and other campus stakeholders: it was a great introduction to our campus and to the programs and activities that we offer. It’s good to have friends in political office, and even better to have ones who recognize the potential and opportunity that CSI possesses!

My week concluded with lengthy budget briefings, and with the monthly College Council and Faculty Senate meetings. It is clear that there is a desire for more information as it relates to the budget and its implications for our campus, so Chief Financial Officer Carlos Serrano and I will be hosting a “town hall” in the coming weeks to share that information. One piece of (very) good news that I can share now, however, is that the campus—through the hard work of our colleagues in the Engineering and Environmental Science programs--received an award of more than a half million dollars to jumpstart work on green energy/offshore wind initiatives. The project bodes well for our relationships with others on the Island, and is a testament to the leadership of Chairperson Antoniadis and others who were instrumental in securing these funds. Well done, colleagues!

As the Passover and Easter holidays approach, I want to wish all who observe/celebrate a calm and peaceful weekend. With no classes in session next week, I am likely to take some much-needed and (I think) richly deserved time away from campus—as such, there will likely be a hiatus in my weekly communication.

Until next time,



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