

August 4, 2022

Colleagues:

I hope this email finds you well and that you are enjoying some downtime this summer. I write with an update as to campus activities since my last communication.

Campus renovations are in full swing as we prepare for the return of students with the fall term. In addition to the usual upkeep, our colleagues in the Division of Campus Planning, Facilities Management, and Operations have been busy with a series of important upgrades. In addition to facilitating a series of office moves, work on the long-awaited Makerspace is continuing, as are preparations for the groundbreaking ceremony for the “Willowbrook Mile,” an interactive and accessible trail that tells the history of the Willowbrook State School and the campaign for Disability Rights by self-advocates and others. That event is scheduled for September 17 and is sure to be the capstone of a year-long series of events dedicated to “The Year of Willowbrook.” Additionally, improvements to campus parking lots, sidewalks, roofs, and the Campus Center are in the planning or processing stages. It has been a busy summer, for sure!

This week I attended both a sector meeting with Senior College presidents and the monthly Council of President’s meeting at CUNY Central. Each was revelatory in that they surfaced issues of common concern while allowing for shared ideas about how to deal with challenges related to enrollment, fall reopening plans, and the relationship between the individual campuses and the chancellery. I truly believe that both CSI and CUNY are approaching inflection points and that we must be agile and nimble if we are to continue to provide access to transformational educational opportunities to the diverse communities we serve. Engagement with local employers to build apprenticeships and internships, new approaches to credit for prior learning, and the development of relevant degree paths are critical to arresting our enrollment decline and securing a healthy future for our colleges. All of us have an important role to play in these regards.

I also attended a meeting with representatives from the Hillel Society at the local Jewish Community Center. Hillel has been an important partner and key student support organization at CSI and within CUNY. I was pleased and proud to add my signature in support of their recent grant application aimed at assessing and improving campus climate, an important initiative in these times of rising intolerance and increased anti-Semitism. The campus and the university remain united in our opposition to any type of activity that targets or marginalizes any member of our community and we will continue to call out and oppose such activity when we are made aware of it.

As we approach the fall term, it is important that we realize and recognize the value that on-campus experiences—educational and otherwise—have for our students. It is imperative that we have a robust presence at our Willowbrook and St. George sites, so that all of our partners—including those from our local community—can benefit from the rich array of services and activities that we provide. While there are certainly benefits to remote work, I truly feel that they are not as rewarding as having a rich campus life that is more reminiscent of a traditional college

experience than what we have provided for the past two years. I genuinely appreciate that some aspects of our jobs can be performed well remotely, and I very much appreciate the dedication and contributions of those members of our staff who have had a steady and steady presence on our campus. Data shows that students perform better and are happier and more connected with a “normal” college experience and we should therefore aim for a “return to normalcy” if public health and other determinants allow. Consistent with that I am pleased to announce the return of a CSI tradition, the annual welcome back BBQ, currently scheduled for August 24. I look forward to seeing many of you at that event. More details will be shared shortly.

Until next time, TGL



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