

September 2, 2022

Colleagues:

As we approach the unofficial end of summer and the celebration of Labor Day, I write with some updates concerning recent activities.

This week, I enjoyed walking about our Willowbrook campus, where I met with many of our new and returning students. The energy and excitement were palpable as they resumed “traditional” activities after two long years of mostly remote learning. It is clear from those with whom I spoke that they are so happy to be transitioning out of the pandemic phase and glad to be back on our beautiful campus. So am I! Shortly, I will make a trip to CSI St. George to observe operations and interact with students and staff at that location.

In addition to meeting with students, this week, I met with the Senior College Presidents to discuss issues of common concern, and to review matters related to the CUNY budgeting process. This was followed by brief interactions between myself, CUNY Trustee Michael Arvanites, and State Senator Diane Savino, as we brainstormed ideas related to enrollment growth and how the campus can continue its legacy of borough stewardship. As the only public institution of higher education in the borough, we need to capitalize on our competitive advantage—and the support of folks on both sides of the political aisle—to demonstrate not just that we are cost-effective but represent value added to today’s student population.

On Wednesday, I had a lengthy one-on-one with the Chancellor to discuss CSI’s Performance Management Plan, a wide-ranging data set that looks at various metrics—from fundraising and diversity to faculty productivity and philanthropy--the basis of which can be found in CUNY’s Data Book. This is an annual meeting where the campus Presidents are asked about areas of concern, and where they can discuss issues such as enrollment, student performance, facility issues, budgetary concerns, or any number of myriad issues. I was glad to be able to share my perspective about CSI and discuss my vision for where we can and should be headed.

To that end, whereas my first semester as Interim President was all about the Middle States reaccreditation process, it is clear that our top priority this academic year must be to stabilize and grow our enrollment: this is a collective and individual effort—all of us are recruiters and the interactions we have with current or prospective students may well be the ultimate factor in whether they decide to attend or remain at CSI. Additionally, I am committed to actions that will improve campus climate, especially for members of traditionally marginalized communities, and to advance important initiatives related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Belongingness. Just as Labor Day reminds us that a collective is only as strong as its weakest link, we must recognize that our community is only inclusive if ALL members feel valued and appreciated. The two themes of this academic year, enrollment and campus climate, are not unrelated, so making headway on one will yield results for both.

Later on Wednesday, I had a meeting with the East Coast Conference, as we navigate issues related to campus access and return-to-play. I am excited by the move to NCAA Division II and believe that this can and will be a recruitment engine that drives enrollment. That evening (did I mention it was a long day?), I met the Finance and Audit Committee of the CSI Foundation, where we reviewed our portfolio, discussed our mandatory audit (no findings!), and strategized

for the coming year. There was a full board meeting the following day, and it is always heartening to see such committed levels of support from our friends on the Board.

I wish you a restful and restorative Holiday weekend.

Until next time,



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