

Minutes of the One Hundred and Sixty-Third Meeting of the College Council
Formed on November 14, 2002

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2024, 2:30pm – 3:25pm

Location: 1P-119 & Zoom Meeting

CC Members in Attendance

Zaghloul Ahmed, Neo Antoniadis, Comfort Asanbe, Ashley Bardsley, Warrick Bell, Alan Benimoff, Jason Bishop, Vandana Chaudhry, Cynthia Chris, Danna Curcio, David Curcio, Deborah DeSimone, Glenn Garbe Sheehan, Gene Fellner, Christine Flynn Saulnier, Valerie Forrestal, Kenneth Gold, Hernan Green, Patti Gross, Orit Gruber, Roshen Hendrickson, Michel Hodge, Susan Holak, Burnett Joiner, Wilma Jones, Sylvia Kahan, Patricia Kahn, Luke Katz, Michael Levitas, Timothy Lynch, Ralf Peetz, Greg Philips, Sarah Pollack, Alex Scott, Don Selby, Suzy Shepardson, Susan Smith-Peter, Carles Solà Belda, Michael Steiper, Sarolta Takács, John Verzani, Simone Wegge, Siona Wilson, Mark Zdziarski, Sarah Zelikovitz.

CC Members Via Zoom

Winsome Alston, Heidi Bertels, Thomas Chen, Clarissa Domingo, Yumei Huo, Catherine Lavender, Alfred Levine, Alan Lyons, Mary Murphy, Ralf Peetz, Mark Aaron Polger, Ruth Silverberg, Thomas Tellefsen, Mark White, John Wing.

Guests In-Person

Carol Brower, Sharon Christian, Jessica Collura, Brian Cortijo, Nina Del Gatto, Aleks Dudek, Katrina Fama, Stephen Ferst, Stephanie Gonzalez Allen, Debra Kee, Lisa Korchma, Nicole LaMassa, Mark Lewental, Chase Licata, Carey Manifold, Susan Massara, Tara Mastroilli, Donna Scimeca, Amy Stempler, Rosemary Vitale, Robert Yurman.

Guests via Zoom

Manuela Alongi, Anjail Ameen-Rice, Maria Bellamy, Michelle Borowski, Marta Cabral, Stefan Charles-Pierre, Barbara Cohen, Linda Conte, Andrew Diaz, Emmanuel Esperance, Catherine Ferrara, Tony Gallego, Doriann Hyland, Koby Kohulan, Georgia Landrum, Thomas Lauria, David Maxon, Hung Nguyen, Edward Patri, Janine Scotto, Jessica Stein, Joyce Taylor, Brenda Valentin.

- I. **Approval of the proposed agenda** – approved with no changes
- II. **Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting** – approved with no changes
- III. **Executive Committee of College Council Report – Kenneth Gold**

The Executive Committee met with President Lynch, Provost Steiper, and Chief of Staff Collura on April 9 for its monthly consultation. We began by discussing in-person presence on campus, as we had previously been asked to consider holding our Council meetings entirely in person. Thinking that the question at hand was how well a given body or committee functioned remotely, we examined

attendance rates both before and after COVID, finding that currently we regularly have a quorum from in-person attendance alone and have more non-members attending today in both modalities. In our discussion it became clear that the President and Provost are understandably thinking more broadly about faculty presence in person to further revive campus life. We encourage the administration to engage in sustained conversation with faculty and staff leadership about ways of returning to a more robust presence on campus while retaining zoom meetings when they offer obvious advantages. Our conversation about commencement was most satisfactory. President Lynch has clearly listened to faculty and staff concerns about the initial plans for departmental exercises and is proceeding to arrange for all such ceremonies to occur immediately after the main ceremony. There remain differences from how we commemorated before COVID, but students will hear their names and shake hands with faculty as they walk across a stage or in front of a classroom.

We discussed the process for considering organizational mergers of academic units and were assured that no change is taking place this academic year. The plan is to discuss a merger of the Schools of Education and Health Sciences next year, and the following elements will be part of the process: consultation and deliberation by affected faculty, consideration of multiple alternatives, development of a formal written proposal, and presentation and discussion at the IPC of this body and the full Faculty Senate as per our governance plan.

We discussed the student government's recommendation to cease spending student fees to pay for the ferry shuttle to campus, a recommendation we expect the students to support in their recently completed referendum. We were disappointed to learn that many faculty and staff who use the shuttle do not regularly pay the nominal fee for the service.

We discussed a challenge that library staff and users are facing: noise from other students who are using its space for activities not typically associated with quiet study. In our discussion of possible solutions, we learned that the lounges in the academic buildings will be receiving new furniture and ask that you encourage your students to make greater use of these spaces.

Finally, we received some quick updates on several topics, which I think you'll hear in various reports that follow mine.

I want to conclude by acknowledging Carol Brower, who is retiring after thirty years at CSI. She came to CSI in 1994 to serve as the Coordinator of Health and Wellness, but most of us know her as the Director of Student Life, a position she has held since 2000. In addition to excelling in her job, Carol has always stepped up in the face of tragedies like 9/11 and Super Storm Sandy. For me, lining up on Alumni Walk for commencement will not be the same without her. We wish you well, Carol, and thank you for all you have contributed to CSI.

I hope you all enjoy the break from classes next week.

IV. President's Report – Timothy Lynch

President Lynch started off his presentation by explaining that he was wearing blue jeans because it was Denim Day, a day dedicated to support victims of sexual assault and sexual violence. However, later that evening he will transform himself (like Clark Kent) into a suit and tie for the "Spring into Giving" Gala,

tonight. He expressed his gratitude in advance for everyone's support of the forthcoming evening's event.

Last Sunday [April 14], President Lynch mentioned that CSI hosted Accepted Students and the day was a resounding success. Nearly 300 prospective students showed up and they were met by student affairs professionals, student facing offices, and faculty in academic departments. At last count, nearly 100 of them had registered for classes for the fall semester. One hundred is a large conversion rate. He thanked AVP Scott and his team, along with all the representatives of the various academic departments who gave up a gorgeous Sunday morning and passed on brunch or church or kids soccer games, or whatever it is they might have had planned, to come here to sell our programs to these new students.

Just this week, President Lynch learned of a seven-figure grant that was won by faculty in the School of Education along with faculty in the Math department associated with the Teachers Education Honors Academy. He also reported that one of our faculty members, Professor Bang Geul Han of Media Culture, has received a Guggenheim award, and was one of three within the City University of New York, and one of a small number nationwide. CSI also received the very welcome news from U.S. News and World Report that our graduate programs in nursing and physical therapy were ranked among the best in their respective disciplines, nationwide. These wonderful achievements make CSI an easy sell to prospective students.

President Lynch also reported on the Borough Hearing meeting, where wonderful things were said about CSI from over 50 of our colleagues who testified. He believed that the message was received loudly and clearly by the Chancellor, who told President Lynch that what he heard was "If we [CSI] get additional resources, we will do great things. And if we get diminished resources, we will do nothing." Moreover, he added that it was clear from those who testified, students especially, that they benefit tremendously from the work done at the College of Staten Island and that many of them would be adrift without the resources and the support that we should provide for them. He expressed his thanks to all those who attended and told our story to an audience who needed to hear it.

Next, President Lynch turned to the upcoming commencement activities. Commencement will be celebrated on May 23rd and we expect over 1,900 graduands. Campus wide commencement activities will take place on the Great Lawn and later in various departmental exercises, that afternoon. He encouraged all faculty and staff to help our students get across that last finish line, knowing that many of them are under incredible stress and anxiety, as are our faculty and staff members. He encouraged all to take care of each other, too.

In terms of taking care of each other, President Lynch mentioned that the New York City Commission on Human Rights had been on campus this week to provide training in understanding the Muslim experience, as well as recognizing and responding to combating Islamophobia. This was part of a series of trainings that CSI has provided this semester to better understand the diverse communities of which we are a part. Just a few weeks ago, CSI hosted the CUNY-wide LGBTQIA plus conference. He added that there will be additional training on being an upstander and how to respond to incivility when encountered, here or elsewhere.

With regards to next year's budget, President Lynch mentioned that the State does not have a budget yet, but the governor anticipates that the budget will be finalized, shortly. He shared that the proposed budget aims to fund the new contract for DC-37 labor union, which is welcome news. If this line item is not approved in the State budget, it will be a hard hit to our campus operations over five million dollars.

At the third quarter of the fiscal year, President Lynch noted that CSI is trending towards a five million dollars deficit at the end of the fiscal year which was much better than 8 million dollars that had been projected at the start of the fiscal year. He was certain that CSI would reach its \$2.1-million-dollar savings target.

Q&A

A question was raised about the auxiliary money for student prizes. Rob Wallace was not present to answer this question and President Lynch promised to follow up on getting the information.

V. Professional Staff Congress (PSC) Report

There was a bargaining session last Thursday that I cannot give you an update on yet, but in bargaining sessions at the end of March, an economic offer did emerge. It did, however, disappoint. For example, in their 4.5-year proposal, management offers us salary increases that hover around 3% each year. These are not only disappointing numbers, especially given inflation, but they are also tied to a number of unacceptable demands, such as weakened job protections for HEOs and teaching adjuncts. Note, also, that this 4.5-year agreement includes 2023, which is, of course, now over. Needless to say, this proposal put forward by management was not accepted by our bargaining team. Indeed, it is highly disappointing, and not to mention almost a year and a half late. Nonetheless, having an economic offer does represent some progress negotiations.

At the last March bargaining session, and also the PSC's last labor-management meeting, PSC President James Davis also criticized CUNY central's proposed bylaws changes, not to mention the timing of the proposed bylaws changes—and pointed out multiple provisions in the contract that the proposals appear to be conflict with.

Back on our own campus, our labor-management meetings continue to be productive. Our next meeting has been scheduled for May 21st (so let us know if there is an issue you would like us to bring). I also note that at a previous meeting, we asked the administration to develop some explicit guidance on doxxing (should anyone on campus ever be victimized). We appreciate the administration honoring that request—and doing so before CUNY central had developed any kind of policy itself. Thanks especially to Rob Wallace for working on that.

Finally, and once again, I wanted to thank and congratulate everyone for the excellent showing—best I have seen since being at CSI—at the public hearing on Monday. At a subsequent meeting, the CUNY Board of Trustees was presented with over 100 pages of written testimony from those who spoke in person or submitted written statements following the hearing. These hearings happen every semester, so hopefully the next one can be similarly well attended. We appreciate efforts by President Lynch, chairs, and deans to get people out for that event.

So, it is a busy time now and we all need the spring break that is coming so late this year—please try to get some rest, and we will see you next month.

VI. Report from the Administration – None

VII. Reports of the committees of the College Council

a. Committee on Organization – Warrick Bell

The University Faculty Senate has one seat unfilled. The first meeting of the new slate takes place next month.

Nomination forms for CSI's governance bodies were being prepared and will be sent out shortly via email. Approximately half of the departmental seats on the Faculty Senate were up for renewal. Also, approximately two-thirds of the at-large seats on the Faculty Senate were also up for renewal. Several committees of the College Council would also see a significant turnover.

Given this large turnover, Warrick Bell urged members to pay attention to the nomination forms when they arrive as one's seat might very likely be up for renewal. He added that it often happens that people do not realize that their term expired.

Warrick Bell briefly explained the process of getting elected. If a seat was unchallenged, no vote takes place. If there was a challenged seat, then a vote would take place. He also noted that the departmental representatives are elected in their department, emphasizing that the rep may not necessarily be the department chair.

b. By-Laws Committee – Kenneth Gold

Kenneth Gold presented the proposed By-laws to be voted on. He hoped that members had had a chance to review the document which had been sent out earlier this week. He reminded the body that the By-laws committee had been working on these revised changes for over five years. Primarily, the revisions were minimal and were simply tweaks of the last major revision of the By-laws which acknowledged the integration of the new schools. These tweaks were small but meaningful, and attempted procedurally to address areas that were not spelled out. Highlights of some of the changes made include, for example, what happens to a departmental representative who is elected as department chair. Language for the Admissions committee was tweaked. He explained that the process to approve the Bylaws would include a two-thirds majority vote from the College Council, a referendum of the instructional staff, the results of which would be submitted to the CUNY Board of Trustees by President Lynch, with his approval.

The motion to adopt the proposed bylaws approved.

Ken Gold thanked all the members by name who had been working on this revision over the past few years: Warrick bell, Cynthia Chris, Catherine Lavender, Suzy Shepardson, Susan Smith-Peter, Rob Wallace, and Interim Provost Steiper.

c. Administrative Review Committee – No report

d. Institutional Planning Committee – Timothy Lynch

No report. However, President Lynch mentioned that the IPC committee had a meeting scheduled for tomorrow, [April 19, 2024].

e. Budget Committee – Simone Wegge

In a recent College Council meeting, it was mentioned that we have a \$7.8 million operating budget deficit for fiscal 2024. CUNY Central put forward an interesting deal: if we are able to find \$2.1 million in savings and get this number down to \$5.7 million, CUNY Central will cover the rest of the deficit. \$5.7 million is a big number and 75% of the 7.8 million. This sounds like a great deal, and so it is kind of imperative that we meet it. We would look silly if we do not do our best to make this savings of \$2.1 million. I have been told by the President Lynch and the CFO that they are confident we will achieve this savings goal.

Throughout the year CUNY Central goes back and forth with the 25 campuses on their financial reports, checking to see how actual expenses and tuition revenue are turning out for the year and providing feedback and sometimes adjustments for each campus. Right now, CFO Carlos Serrano tells me that he is still waiting for the release of the University's third quarter financial report; note that we are well into our 4th quarter of fiscal 2024 and cannot do anything about the 3rd quarter anymore.

Even though this 3rd quarter report is late, in the last month or so CUNY Central decided to adjust our expenses **upwards** for Fiscal 2024 as a result of the new District Council – 37 contract.

Let me explain. Recently, the DC – 37 union, the State of New York and CUNY all agreed to a new labor agreement. Many non-instructional staff on our campus, over 500 co-workers, belong to the DC – 37 union. Yay! They will get a raise as well as backpay (did you hear that, Jason Bishop?). We are happy for our colleagues in DC – 37.

Back to the money stuff. As the 1976 Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman once stated, “there is no free lunch,” and as the expression common across a few cultures goes, “money does not grow on trees.” I see it as my duty to be clear with all of you about what the new contract actually means for our campus. This new contract will add \$4.8 million to our expenses for Fiscal 2024, broken down into \$1.7 Million of recurring costs and \$3.1 Million for one-time costs related to retroactive pay and signing bonuses.

In the meantime, there is some kind of political game being played such that the top brass at CUNY is highly confident that the State of New York will pay for the new expense of the DC-37 contract for all 25 CUNY campuses. My understanding is that this should become clear once the New York State budget is passed. If they do not cover it, we will set up a massive lemonade stand at the front gate, and all take turns selling lemonade this summer.

Lastly, all of you should be aware that the mid-year financial report of the CUNY system was posted online a month ago. The last 30 pages of this report show you the good, the bad and the ugly for all 25 CUNY campuses.

Here is the link: <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/trustees/meetings-of-the-board/FinAdminAgenda031824-01.pdf>

Happy Spring Break!

f. Facilities Committee – No report

VIII. Student Government Report – Luke Katz

Luke Katz, president of the Student Government Association (SGA) began his report by reminding everyone that Spirit Week had been going on for the past two weeks. Next, he mentioned how proud he was of the student elections that had recently taken place, including the effort put forth for the referendum. Over 1600 students signed the referendum, and nearly 600 students voted. He was proud to state that during his term as president he was able to get 18 other students actively campaigning – giving out water, candy, and talking to students about their problems. He expressed his appreciation of the position he held as president of the SGA which had given him the opportunity to lead by example.

Q&A

A question was raised about the number of voting students. Luke Katz explained that 1,000 was the number of votes needed; however, in over 30 years, this number has never been reached. Pre-COVID numbers had hovered between 550 and 600. This year's vote brought in 596 voters, in comparison to 337 last year. He noted that compared to other CUNY colleges, our student voting numbers were higher. In answer to a follow up question of why the low turnout, Katz speculated that while the referendum was a collection of handwritten signatures, the vote had to be done through CSI Connect and many students had encountered login issues.

Another question raised concerned the elimination of the ferry shuttle and whether there was evidence collected to support this action. Katz responded that the SGA was informed by several data sources – over ten years of usage data from VP Michel Hodge and CFO Carlos Serrano. Bottomline, they found that only 3% of the student body used the ferry shuttle; while 100% of students were being charged \$40/semester to fully fund the service. In the meantime, there are existing MTA buses that are available for students to take to CSI, although they are found to be slower.

Kenneth Gold followed up with a clarification that although the number of student votes did not meet the threshold of 1000, it does not make the votes invalid as there were mechanisms in place for the college to move forward with votes under 1000.

Another question raised pertained to the timetable of the renovations to the student lounges (that he mentioned in last month's report). He responded by saying that SGA had put aside \$160,000.00 for 10 lounges to be renovated. He had been assured that the schedule for these lounges was on track and would hopefully be completed by June 30th. His understanding is that student funded projects were to be completed by the end of the SGA's year.

IX. Higher Education Officer Steering Committee Report - Suzy Shepardson

The HEOSC had its spring semester meeting with President Lynch and members of his team—we were joined by Jessica Collura, Rob Wallace, and the Provost for a frank conversation about building conditions, Commencement arrangements, plans for the DEIB office, and the recently-completed campus climate surveys. Much of that information has been shared via other reports this afternoon.

We look forward to next month's report on the HERI survey results and next steps, and we want to thank the administration for their continued support and candor in our conversations.

At our regular monthly meeting, we discussed preparations for and potential impacts of CUNYfirst's unavailability at the end of next week due to system upgrades.

Happy Spring!

X. Auxiliary Services Corporation Report – No report

XI. Old Business - None

XII. New Business

Respectfully submitted by Wilma Jones
Secretary, Executive Council of the College Council