

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

Date: Thursday, September 21, 2023, 2:30pm – 3:30pm  
Location: 1P-119 & Zoom Meeting

**CC Members in Attendance**

Zaghloul Ahmed, Winsome Alston, Neo Antoniadis, Comfort Asanbe, Alyson Bardsley, Warrick Bell, Alan Benimoff, Heidi Bertels, Jason Bishop, Holly Block, Cynthia Chris, Vandana Chaudhry, Thomas Chen, Katie Cumiskey, David Curcio, Deborah DeSimone, Christine Flynn Saulnier, Valerie Forrestal, Rosane Gertner, Orit Gruber, Kenneth Gold, Hernan Green, Patti Gross, Anusha Harris, Sheila Harris, Roshen Hendrickson, Susan Holak, Susan Imberman, Burnett Joiner, Wilma Jones, Patricia Kahn, Luke Katz, Catherine Lavender, Alfred Levine, Michael Levitas, Timothy Lynch, Lisa Manne, Mary Murphy, Natalia Pankratova, Lee Papa, Michael Paris, Ralf Peetz, Greg Philips, Keith Pisons, Sarah Pollack, Angelina Raio, Alexander Scott, Glenn Garbe Sheehan, Suzy Shepardson, Ruth Silverberg, Susan Smith-Peter, Carles Sola Belda, Michael Steiper, Sarolta Takacs, Thomas Tellefsen, Mikael Vejdemo-Johansson, John Verzani, Robert Wallace, Simone Wegge, Siona Wilson, John Wing, Cindy Wong, Mark Zdziarski.

**CC Members Via Zoom**

Maryan Feola, Yumei Huo, Andrew Leykam, Sharon Loverde, Jane Marcus-Delgado, Philippe Marius, Jonathan Peters, Mark Aaron Polger, Don Selby, George Wang, Mark White

**Guests In-Person**

Cheryl Adolf, Vincenza Albarano, Carol Brower, Jessica Collura, Brian Cotijo, Sharon Christian, Nina DelGatto, Aleks, Dudek, Jennifer Durando, Emmanuel Esperance, Katrina Fama, Stephen Ferst, Neila Green, Lisa Korchma, Jackie Lamberti, Michael Lederhandler, Mark Lewental, Susan Massara, Tara Mastroilli, David Pizzuto, Terri Sangiorgio, Chang Hui Shen, Jessica Stein, Amy Stempler, Rosemary Vitale, Jonathan Wesley

**Guests via Zoom**

Cesar Arena-Mena, Deserie Bebe, Marta Cabral, Shannon Cammarano, Barbara Cohen, Christine Cohen, Linda Conte, Celeste Del Maestro, Danielle Dimitrov, Clarisse Domingo, Catherine Ferrara, Antonio Gallego, Doriann Hyland, Tasheema Johnson, Jane Kisto, Michele Karpeles, Koby Kohulan, Lynne Lacomis, Thomas Lauria, Eileen Parathyras, Leonardo Pignataro, Caterina Scarimbolo, Jannine Scotto, Byron Taylor, Joyce Taylor, Brenda Valentin, Shuqun Zhang

- I. Approval of the proposed agenda – approved**
- II. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting – approved**
- III. Executive Committee of College Council Report – Kenneth Gold**

Good afternoon and welcome back. I hope this academic year is off to a great start for you. I am also pleased to welcome back President Lynch, interim no more. The Executive Committee met with him, Provost Steiper, and Chief of Staff Collura on September 5.

We began with the budget, inquiring how we managed to end FY23 with nearly no deficit. The President highlighted several factors: a collection rate that surpassed 90%, our improved spring 2023 enrollment, and small but meaningful changes made by academic affairs. The president acknowledged that our structural deficit remains; you will recall that the last of our federal dollars were also used last year. Our discussion of the FY 24 budget was limited, as CUNY still has not finalized what the College can expect. We will invite AVP Carlos Serrano to present at a meeting this Fall, though October may be premature.

We then tackled enrollment, offering our congratulations for surpassing the Fall 23 enrollment target and discussing the implications for the future. The significant uptick in new enrollment may reflect a backlog of students who delayed going to college during the pandemic. This likelihood requires us to continue to pay attention to retaining current—especially graduate students, for whom the Fall 23 retention numbers were not great. We heard that students who owed the College \$1000 or less were allowed to register. My personal concern that we do not make the cut off too high in search of additional students was partially allayed by the President informing us that a higher threshold would not have yielded additional students. I look forward to hearing more about enrollment shortly.

We then discussed the functioning of the purchasing office. You may recall our collective frustration last year over the College's failure to spend material and other student serving charges in a timely manner if at all. The President contended that we are now better prepared to handle such orders much more expeditiously as a result of hiring new buyers—we now have two in place with one more search in the works. The purchasing office is also working directly with departments that have a high volume of classroom materials to purchase. Unfortunately, the rollout of CUNY BUY is ill-timed, as the learning curve for this new system will counteract some of the improved efficiency of the Purchasing Office. We expressed concern that our staff are not sufficiently trained for CUNY BUY, and though we learned that 160 CSI employees have undergone training, many have expressed frustration with the quality of CUNY's training.

We asked the president to discuss new aspects of his vision for the College. He offered the caveat that he is steward of the shared vision that will grow out of the Strategic Planning process, though faculty and staff will need to experience that process as truly open. He spoke of wanting to grow graduate programs and better understand the market that might be served by St. George. We ran out of time to discuss transportation matters and asked the President to report on any bus changes in his remarks today.

We discussed the administration's poorly chosen manner of moving the Bertha Harris Women's Center to Building 1C and placing it under the oversight of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). This may or may not be a good idea but doing it by fiat during the summer without discussion with the appropriate faculty and without thorough investigation of its historic role is not how we like to proceed at CSI. I commend the faculty center's director, Catherine Lavender, and the members of its advisory board for the outcry they raised and am pleased that President Lynch agreed to let a study group consider the matter this fall. In our

meeting, he acknowledged the error in roll out and committed to accepting the study group's recommendation. By way of explanation, the President expressed interest in growing Dr. Wesley's position into one focused more on programming and less with compliance, and we too think having a cabinet level position with a focus on DEI is warranted at CSI and understand the need to flesh it out.

We concluded by discussing plans for searches: the President identified the following administrative searches as underway or planned for this coming year: Provost, Dean of Science and Technology, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness.

We did not have time to discuss the President's other plans for the cabinet, but I have encouraged him to reconstitute a VP for Finance and Administration. Finally, I was heartened that our proposed budget included four assistant HEO (Higher Education Officer) and five tenure-track faculty positions. Hopefully, CUNY will approve, as we cannot continue to suffer with unending attrition.

**IV. Election for Executive Committee At-Large Seat** – Mary Murphy was elected, unopposed.

**V. President's Report – Timothy Lynch**

President Lynch was pleased to share enrollment numbers for Fall 2023 which exceeded the targeted number of 10,604 set in May to 10,704 students. He alluded to a forthcoming presentation by AVP Scott who would discuss how it was that CSI was able to achieve these numbers. This fall's enrollment, he mentioned, represents the largest single year-over-year gain in enrollment since 2,009. It was the largest single entering class CSI has had in several years and this was the fifth largest class in over the last 25 years. He extended congratulations to VP Hodge and AVP Scott, and many others who had played a pivotal role in retention: the Provost, CAS, ASAP, Deans and Chairs.

Nevertheless, President Lynch reported that the budget situation remains unclear. He added that for Fiscal Year 2023, he anticipated closing with a balanced budget, but that will not be finalized until November of this year. CSI's financial plans, which were submitted to the university in June, were still under review. He stated that Assistant Vice President Serrano recently had conversations with the CUNY Central Office to work through some issues and requests for additional information. He reminded the body that CSI was in a better place than we were nine (9) months ago and that we were very responsible stewards when it came to the budget. CSI was able to reduce its deficit by 75% in the first three quarters of the fiscal year and that was done through a variety of mechanisms: increased enrollment, some identified efficiencies, improved collection rates, and cost controls.

Regarding new hires, President Lynch confirmed that he has committed to making strategic intentional hires moving forward, including six (6) tenure track faculty members, as well as the conversion of several part-time positions into full-time positions to better serve our students.

In addition to the improved enrollment budget situations, President Lynch commented on the improved look and feel of our beautiful campus. He stated that the sidewalk project has kicked off and will be completed this time next year. It is a wonderful project that will improve accessibility, campus wide. He added that he has made strategic investments in refreshing the entrances to all our buildings by hiring some contract laborers and painters over the summer to really give the campus a more welcoming environment.

Speaking of a welcoming environment, President Lynch spoke about several initiatives tied to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) activities. These include:

- Partnerships with the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island and Hillel Staten Island, where we are leveraging our relationship and our friendship for the betterment of our students.
- Artwork (4 out of 8 installations) from a campus climate improvement funded grant project that was completed by our students under the direction of one of our adjunct faculty members. The artwork will be installed in the atrium of 1P. He thanked Professor Wilson and Dr. Wesley for their stewardship of this project.
- On October 24th and 25th, CSI will host a symposium on combatting antisemitism. We anticipate the Chancellor and others attending to participate.

In closing, President Lynch stated that he was proud and pleased as to where CSI stood with enrollments, budget, facilities, engagement with the wider community. He expressed his excitement about what the future holds.

## **Q&A**

A question was raised regarding the probability of a reduced ferry shuttle schedule and loop bus service. It was expressed that these bus services have helped increase the diversity of our student body.

President Lynch responded that CSI was in conversations with First Transit, who was the provider of the ferry and loop service. He stated that he and Vice President Hodge were looking at ways that we might be able to optimize the service. VP Hodge has met with the transportation Task Force. VP Hodge has also met with students, as both the Ferry and the Loop Shuttle services are paid for exclusively by student transportation fee contributions. However, he noted that the number of stops on the loop has been underutilized and that they were looking to reallocate some assets to the ferry service. These are all part of the negotiation with First Transit.

President Lynch also mentioned that they have had several conversations with the MTA about increasing city bus service to the campus proper. Those conversations have been less than fruitful, noting that it is not in MTA's best interest to deviate from their established routes.

Another question was raised regarding a place for research in the new strategic plan. President Lynch prefaced his answer by stating that the IPC will be holding its first meeting in the fall term

next Friday (9/29), where he hoped to establish task forces or working groups around each of the five (5) pillars of the strategic plan that had previously been identified through the survey assessments. He believes that the pillar that deals with faculty and staff development could include the expectations of research support for faculty and he promised to bring that recommendation to the IPC.

A suggestion was made to the President to consider, to the extent possible, that rather than making Task Forces and ad hoc committees for the strategic plan that you work with the existing committee structure and governance structures that we have.

Another suggestion was made to the president to involve the Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee more in the college-wide budget issues. President Lynch deferred the question to the Provost, who chairs the P& B Committee. Kenneth Gold, Chair of College Council, expressed (a view as he understood this as a former chair), that the “B” in P&B Committee only focuses on the academic budget and not the whole college’s budget.

## **VI. Professional Staff Congress (PSC) Report**

On behalf of our chapter leadership, welcome back! All over campus there is a sense that we are turning a corner this semester; in addition to the increase in students, faculty and staff on campus, the campus itself is looking great (and will look even better once our many capital projects are completed). For those of us who were on campus during the summer, the grounds were well-maintained then as well. Thanks to Hope Berte and President Lynch for their stewardship of our beautiful (and sprawling) post-pandemic campus!

This being our first meeting of the body since President Lynch joined us as our permanent president, I also want to take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate him, although we have spoken quite a bit in various other venues since his appointment in June. I do not think it is a violation of the non-disclosure agreement we were all forced to sign against our will to attend candidate interviews (...) when I say that Tim Lynch’s record of support for organized labor made him a compelling candidate to the college’s labor contingent.

And on that note, I want to remind everyone here that the chapter leadership does meet twice a semester with President Lynch’s administration, to head off potential problems on campus before they become grievances—or lawsuits—or at least that is our goal, in good faith. If there are issues in your departments or in your offices that you think we should be addressing, please reach out to us with that information. And let me highlight that HEOs are part of these Labor-Management meetings, and workplace issues affecting our HEOs are always on the agenda. We also have some updates from the central union related to the state of contract negotiations, and I am afraid this part of the report will be less upbeat. I am very disappointed to have to say how far apart our union and CUNY management currently are, and some of the non-economic demands we find in CUNY’s bargaining agenda.

For example, if you are a HEO working in the Bursar, the Registrar's office or in Academic Affairs, CUNY management would like to see you removed from representation by our union. If you are the chair of an academic department, the same goes for you. While our union has no intention of giving in to such shameful, divisive demands, they are nonetheless highly disappointing indicators of CUNY's approach. Among other regrettable demands are the following:

1. Despite letting our contract expire before coming to the negotiating table – and despite how long it is likely to take for negotiations to be finalized – CUNY does not think our members should be awarded retroactive pay. This retroactive pay is likely to amount to one year's worth in the end. (We are currently in our 205th day without a contract, and given the state of negotiations now, it is likely to be close to another 200 days before a new contract is agreed upon).
2. CUNY management's preference is for us to work on a very short contract—three years. The PSC has asked for a five-year contract
3. CUNY management would like to award the largest salary increases to the highest paid in the system; the PSC is asking for across-the-board salary increases for all, with additional and significant increases for our colleagues in HEO and CLT titles.
4. If these items were not disappointing enough, consider the following: among the items in CUNY management's bargaining agenda is a provision allowing the denial of promotions for CUNY employees to be made based on budgetary considerations.

Given these negotiations, the PSC is asking us all to participate in our collective contract struggle. Here are some ways:

1. Attend a bargaining session as an observer – all PSC members (and only members) can sign up to join the bargaining team and watch actual negotiations take place;
2. Attend the upcoming September 28th Mass Online Meeting that the PSC is holding (more info on this soon);
3. Please show your support by showing up to work on October 10<sup>th</sup> wearing PSC colors, namely red; there will be a reminder about this later;
4. And finally, please consider making [VOTE-COPE](#) contributions; there are several important elections for City Council members this year. It is important that our members remember that public higher education is supported by political bodies in our State and City governments; we must support politicians who believe in a better, more fully funded future for our university.

## **Q&A**

A question was raised concerning whether faculty at CSI have received notification about promotion from the Board [of Trustees], given that the Chancellery was looking to make changes based on budgetary considerations. This was the case that was reported by CCNY at the University Faculty Senate (UFS). Jason Bishop was not aware of this, neither was the President.

## **VII. Report from the Administration – Enrollment Mangement**

AVP Alexander Scott reported on how CSI hit and exceeded the targeted enrollment for Fall 2023. Endeavors included, but not limited to, leveraging established partnerships with community college; an increase footprint in digital advertisements, open houses, high school visits, outreach to non-traditional and stop out students via CUNY's Reconnect Program, and

other increased efficiencies. His report also included data that showed a comparison across CUNY's senior, comprehensive, and community colleges. He ended his report with a call for continued support from all faculty and staff, and a reminder of the upcoming Open House on October 29. See the attached PowerPoint presentation.

#### Q&A

A question was raised about graduate enrollment. AVP Scott responded that CSI was slightly down in numbers. While the number for continuing graduate students was down by 10%, there is a healthy uptick in new graduate students.

### **VIII. Reports of the committees of the College Council**

#### **a. Committee on Organization – Warrick Bell**

Warrick Bell, Chair of the Committee on Organization, reported that nomination forms were sent out in early September, however there are a few committees that still have some vacant seats. They include the Course & Standing Committee, Academic Technology Committee, and Research Committee. He urged members to nominate colleagues who might be interested in serving on these committees.

#### **b. By-Law Committee – Kenneth Gold**

Kenneth Gold, Chair of the By-Law Committee, mentioned that the committee will be bringing a proposal forward with some minor changes, next month.

#### **c. Administrative Review Committee – None**

#### **d. Institutional Planning Committee – None**

#### **e. Budget Committee – Simone Wegge, Chair**

Good afternoon, Everyone. The Budget Committee of the College Council consists of colleagues Drew Poje, Sharon Christian, Dan McCloskey, Ken Gold and myself. We are in our second year as a group.

I believe that our main job is to convey information about the CSI budget to the college community. College finances are not part of our day jobs, and we work for free in this respect, but we try to ask lots of questions. On Monday September 11th we met with our Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carlos Serrano, President Lynch, Provost Steiper and Chief of Staff Jessica Collura to discuss the state of our college's finances.

Note that CSI has two budgets, the operating budget, and the capital budget. When budget issues come up, we are usually speaking about the operating budget, which is about \$90 to \$100 million depending on the year. Well over 90% of this operating budget consists of personnel costs. We also have a capital budget which is in the millions of dollars, nothing to sneeze at.

Most of our operating budget comes from the State of New York, while the City of New York funds a few special programs like ASAP, etc. The 2023 fiscal year started on July 1,

2022 and ended on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023. We are basically three months now into our fiscal year 2024.

At our recent meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup>, we asked about a number of issues.

1. First, we asked about how the expected \$12 million deficit for fiscal 2023 had shrunk down to almost zero. How did this happen? We figured everyone here wants some kind of answer to this question. Are we growing money on trees? If so, can one replicate this at home?
  - a. The deficit was narrowed through a combination of increasing collection rates, increasing enrollment, increasing retention (up to 78%) and improving efficiencies in terms of courses offered (size of sections and number of sections). So, in terms of the President Lynch's cabinet, this involved Carlos Serrano's, Michel Hodge's, and Michael Steiper's respective areas. Lots and lots of offices and lots and lots of CSI employees contributed to this effort. We do not have a rough breakdown in terms of what each contributed to bringing down the \$12 million deficit. Maybe these can be provided in the future.
  - b. Let me add that over 90% of our operating budget is personnel costs, and this is affected by attrition as well as new hires and employees getting step increases. On a consistent basis there are colleagues leaving, new colleagues being hired and a few colleagues getting raises (usually step increases on the union tables). Next time we will ask more about these three possible changes and whether attrition was large enough to help bring down the deficit.
  - c. Our goal for enrollment this semester was 10,600, and we surpassed that by 148 students (according to the CSI Dashboard). It is also 4.3% higher than Fall 22. We will not get credit in the budget for this until later (maybe fiscal 2025?), but our administrators are asking CUNY Central for an early advance on that credit. However, we all need to be happy about this and grateful for all of the hard work that took place on this campus the last half year or so. As far as I can tell, we are not the University of West Virginia (cutting departments and offices).
2. At our recent budget meeting, our conversation broadened to discussions of what the future holds.
  - a. We have to be cautious in how we move forward, especially given that we no longer have the federal Covid money to help with the budget, which was \$4.6 million this past fiscal year (2023). In addition, some of our costs have gone up: for instance, we are using less energy, but the prices of a kilowatt of electricity and a BTU of heating oil have gone up. Overall, our energy bill is higher.
  - b. On the more positive side, summer enrollment was up around 16 or 17%, which means around \$600,000 more in revenue for the college. We also have hired 17 new lecturers and a handful of tenure-track professorial faculty. On the staff side, we are ramping up hiring in positions that have to do with enrollment, public safety and maintenance and operations. On the administration side we have some searches going on.



- c. The president and his cabinet are starting to look for more efficiencies as well as more money-making opportunities to use our 204 acres and 26 buildings during the summer months when the campus is under-utilized.
  - d. Progress has been made in the Purchasing area of CFO Carlos Serrano's various units. There has been a lot of turnovers in the last three years, but there are now two persons in charge of purchasing and Carlos is in the process of hiring a Purchasing Director so that he (Carlos) does not have to sign every single order, surely a misuse of Carlos' time.
3. Sometime in October CFO Serrano will hear more from CUNY Central about our financial plan for fiscal 2024. There are some initial numbers for fiscal 2024 on the CUNY Board of Trustees website, however. See this website:  
<https://www.cuny.edu/about/trustees/meetings-of-the-board/>
  4. As more information and feedback from CUNY comes in, we members of the Budget Committee will have another meeting with the college leadership to discuss financial issues. Subsequently, we are expecting CFO Serrano to speak to the College Council body at the November or December meeting.
  5. In sum, we are in a better position than half a year ago. That said, we on the Budget Committee are looking forward to seeing actual numbers later this semester.
- f. Facilities Committee - None

#### **IX. Student Government Report – Luke Katz**

Luke Katz introduced himself as the newly elected president of Student Government Association (SGA). He is a senior and is earning a major in Business Management.

He began his report by thanking the College Council for giving the SGA the opportunity to participate in this body. Next, he expressed that as a personal goal, he would like to see the SGA board be fully complete with 25 members. To date, there are only 17 members. More voices will bring more votes that go into decision-making. With regards to the specific commissioners, Finance has made a few decisions based on requests lately from different bodies and has approved some stipends. Academic and Curricular Affairs will be meeting with the provost soon. In addition, the SGA will work on updating the country flags in the Campus Center to ensure that everyone in the school is represented.

#### **X. Higher Education Officer Steering Committee Report - Suzy Shepardson**

Suzy Shepardson, co-chair of the HEO Steering Committee, reported on the following:

- The Committee had its first meeting of the 2023-24 academic year on Monday, September 18.
- Winsome Alston and Suzy Shepardson were unanimously re-elected as co-chairs.

- The HEOSC will be meeting with President Lynch and members of Cabinet on Tuesday, September 26 to follow up on prior discussion points from last semester and areas of interest/concern for the coming year.

Shepardson thanked all personnel who worked collaboratively over the summer to reach our fall enrollment of 10,704 students—with special recognition to the Registrar's Office, CAAS, Financial Aid, Admissions, and the other student-facing areas. She mentioned that it was important to remember that while our budget picture is improving, in part due to staff retirement/attrition, that attrition comes with different costs to the offices most impacted and their ability to continue delivery of efficient, effective, high-quality service to all members of the College community.

XI. Auxiliary Services Corporation Report

XII. Old Business - None

XIII. New Business – None

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