



Fred Naider, PhD, *Interim Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Dear Colleague:

This year our institution has a special opportunity to focus on the First Year Experience of our students. The College of Staten Island First Year Experience: An Approach to Student Retention and Success Project is being undertaken in conjunction with the Foundations of Excellence Project, facilitated by the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, a national project that has been instrumental in refining and improving the First Year Experience for students at many institutions. This year we have the opportunity to be among four CUNY campuses that will participate in the project, which is in essence a self-study. Other CUNY campuses that have previously participated include Queens College and Brooklyn College. The goal of the self-study is to evaluate how we provide students with support in and outside of the classroom so that they remain in school, succeed in their studies, and graduate. The project involves a study of our policies, services, curricular and co-curricular activities, organizational structure, and philosophies that are now in place to ensure student success. CUNY has generously agreed to provide funding for our work.

Faculty and Staff Survey

In the near future, you will receive a request from me to participate in the Faculty/Staff Survey designed by the Gardner Institute. The survey should take no more than 5-10 minutes of your time and it is intended to gather evidence about the effectiveness of current first-year and transfer practices and policies. Your input is crucial and we are hoping for a very high level of participation.

Committee Structure

At CSI, the effort will be coordinated by a Steering Committee, co-chaired by Dr. A. Ramona Brown, Vice President of Student Affairs, and Dr. Deborah Vess, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Academic Programs. Nine dimensions have been identified as crucial areas, and working groups will conduct a self-study focused on each of these dimensions, leading to recommendations for improvement. The list of committees and committee members is attached to this email.

Evidence of Impact of the FoE Process

Institutions that implemented their action plans to a high degree saw a 12.0 percentage point gain or 17.5% total increase over 5 years in first-to-second year retention rates. This is but one example of the benefits we hope to gain from this project. We encourage you to review the materials on the [John N. Gardner Institute web site](#) related to the Nine Dimensions listed below:

1. Philosophy
2. Organization
3. Transitions
4. Faculty
5. All Students
6. Engagement
7. Diversity
8. Roles and Purposes
9. Improvement

Campus Wide Reception

We look forward to your contributions through service on the committees, completion of surveys, or other input and invite you to attend a campus-wide reception with Dr. Gardner on our project launch date, November 27, 2012, in 1P, from 4:00-5:30. Thank you for your assistance in improving the first year experience of our students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Fred Naider
Interim Provost