

June 11, 2013

Provost Message to the Campus Community –June 2013

As we approach the end of the spring semester and I near completion of my first year as Provost I felt it is worthwhile to summarize my perception of the current State of CSI from an academic perspective. To start this has been a year of much progress in the Academic Affairs area. We have become a doctorate-granting institution. We took initial steps towards the largest restructuring of this College since the merger in 1976 by creating two new schools and several new departments. Dealing with the intricacies of Pathways and the controversy surrounding it was extremely challenging. Nevertheless, I believe that the campus community has responded with a civil and thoughtful discussion of this issue. Most importantly, every CSI course sent to CUNY was developed by the faculty and went through departmental, college Undergraduate Curriculum committee and General Education committee reviews. Due to the Faculty Senate Moratorium on Pathways, the CSI Faculty Senate did not consider Pathways courses. I am gratified by the fact that the Faculty Senate did approve changes in programs, which were necessary for our students to register in the fall and for them to receive financial aid. As I did in the fall 2012, I will construct this message as answers to a series of questions posed to me by a fictitious Professor Fred Naider as the representative of the AREC review structure of our College.

Professor Naider: As Provost have you learned anything that you must consider as you try to perform your job?

Provost: Well to quote Miquel de Cervantes, in Don Quijote de La Mancha “Finally, from so little sleeping and so much reading, [and endless meetings] his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind.” I try to keep things in balance.

Professor Naider: What are some major achievements of your first year as Provost of CSI?

Provost: Academic progress is being made in a number of areas

- This semester we became a doctorate granting institution with the final State Education approval of a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. Middle States has approved this change in our offerings. These actions pave the way for additional doctoral programs (a Doctor in Nurse Practitioner is awaiting the governor’s signature).
- The MSW Program is currently being considered at the CUNY Board of Trustees. If all goes well we will offer a MSW in fall 2014.
- As of July 1, 2013 we will have a School of Business with Departments of Accounting/Finance, Economics, Management and Marketing.
- As of July 1, 2013 we will have new departments of Philosophy and Political Science/Global Affairs.
- Our library holdings increased from 398,000 to 499,910.
- Our start up packages for new faculty continues to grow.
- The College invested more than \$400,000 in pedagogical equipment, laboratory infrastructure and research equipment.
- The college learning assessment (CLA) was conducted at one of the highest levels in CUNY. We are completing assessment plans and implementation processes that should integrate learning outcomes as a norm in our instructional methodologies.

- Our faculty continues to attain distinction and recognition its scholarship.
 - This year 6 CSI faculty members receive prestigious grants from the National Science Foundation including a NSF Career award, the third such award granted to a CSI faculty member in the last three years. A first is the receipt of an NSF grant by a member of the Business faculty.
 - Faculty members organized and ran the 43rd Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages and a symposium "On China's Margin? The Emergence of an East Asian (Pop) Culture", and a national conference organized by graduate students in Media Culture on the topic of (Trans)Media .
 - They are invited to participate in prestigious conferences.

- We held several important academic events including the Serious Conversation on Superstorm Sandy, which drew an audience from all over the city and featured speakers in Architecture, City Planning, Computer Science, Geology, Political Science, Psychology and Social Work. The Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences ran Dean's Symposium that included six events focusing on faculty research and programmatic accomplishments such as 40 years of Science Letters and Society, and Happy First Birthday CLACLS. This ongoing Colloquium highlighted more than a dozen speakers from disciplines represented in the Division.
- We ran successful searches for ~23 faculty positions. This will bring the number of our full-time faculty to about 360. I look forward to welcoming them at the end of the summer and ask you to help mentor them and integrate them into the fabric of the College.
- We, as a community, have migrated to CUNYfirst (still bumpy but progress is being made) and have prepared a fall schedule that is compatible with CSI's Pathways Framework. This involved outstanding cooperation between the faculty and various administrative areas.
- Mr. William Dudley the President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York visited the campus, attended our classes, met with the students and delivered a stimulating lecture.
- We conducted 11 outside evaluations of our academic programs. These reviews are helping us to address issues and make changes that will lead to better pedagogy and scholarship.
- We held an Undergraduate Research Conference with more than 200 student participants. This was a day of high enthusiasm and excitement and featured the outstanding collaboration between students and faculty.
- Governor Cuomo gave a State of the State Address at our campus to a packed audience.

Professor Naidler: How is Academic Affairs interacting with the other stakeholders of the CSI community?

Provost: I think a spirit of cooperation pervades the interactions of Academic Affairs with Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, Administration and Finance, Information Technology and Advancement. My observation is that all of these offices work to enhance the Academic Agenda of CSI. Specific areas of cooperation include

- Partnering on the FOE study.
- The implementation of CUNYfirst.
- Dealing with student complaints against the faculty.
- Investment funds allocations.
- Collaborating to obtain support for graduate students.
- Working together on Residence Halls issues.
- Maintaining faculty-directed technology.

Professor Naidier: What do you consider the challenges for this institution going forward?

Provost: A continuing challenge will be to increase the academic standards of this institution. This will require both the administration and faculty to identify areas that require improvement and develop strategies to address them.

Professor Naidier: Many faculty believe that Pathways undercuts a high quality education. Yet you led the administrative battle to implement Pathways. Doesn't this contradict your request for high standards?

Provost: I analyzed our previous General Education requirements and compared them with the Pathways framework. Obviously there are differences. However, I disagree with the notion that the CSI Pathways Framework will give the students a substandard general education and will "dumb down" the education at CUNY. It is our task as teachers to make sure that our courses are taught at a high level and that our students achieve rigorous learning outcomes. I believe that the courses developed for our Pathways framework will lead to an excellent general education if, and this is a big if, they are taught well and that we are both demanding and fair to our students. Three credit general education courses are widely used in academia and in fact were widely used at many campuses within the CUNY system prior to Pathways.

Professor Naidier: Despite what you say many of our students enter the College underprepared and lacking critical skills. Isn't it reasonable that more classroom time will give them a better education?

Provost: I have never thought that the key issue in education is the amount of time in the classroom. Perhaps more valuable is how a student relates to a course outside of the classroom. If our instructors engage and stimulate the students during the class period it is more likely that the students will spend extra time mastering the subject outside of the classroom. Obviously our job as teachers is to advocate for our courses and disciplines and to be available to help enable students to learn either during, after or in between the actual class meeting.

Professor Naidier: Do you believe that you have interacted well with the faculty?

Provost: As I mentioned last semester I am not comfortable evaluating myself. What I have tried to do is to work with the faculty in a collegial manner, to listen to their ideas and suggestions and then to muster support for their initiatives. I only know one thing; that I have done my best to foster a spirit of collaboration with the faculty.

Professor Naidier: Has your best been good enough in this case?

Provost: I know that there are some faculty who are skeptical that the current administration believes fully in shared governance. I would hope, however, that this represents a minority of the faculty. It is very important to me, and my academic administrators that we have the trust of the faculty and the academic leadership. My door is open at all times to hear ideas, suggestions and even complaints. What I do not appreciate are personal attacks.

Professor Naidier: Isn't it possible that what you term "skepticism" simply reflects the fact that the administration has continued to push ahead on a number of issues, such as schools and splitting departments without full governance support?

Provost: Since assuming the position of Provost I have been very proactive in involving the faculty in discussions of these issues. The issue of forming schools and of splitting departments was not initiated this year. The records show that these discussions go back several years. My outreach showed firm support for a school of business among the business faculty, similar unanimous support for a school of education by the education faculty and support for splitting PEP into three departments by the PEP faculty. A town hall discussion was held on the schools issue and it was discussed several times by the chairs. Only after this thorough consultation did we decide to proceed with the creation of these new entities. The situation in the nursing and health services areas is not totally clear at this time so we have delayed going forward. Once the faculty in these departments informs me of their intentions, the President and I will decide what is the best way to proceed. In all cases we have followed the College of CSI Governance Plan to the extent that we understand it.

Professor Naider: How can you say you follow governance when you do not bring issues to the Faculty Senate.

Provost: Unfortunately the CSI Governance Plan is ambiguous when it comes to the creation of departments. According to our reading it is the College Council that makes recommendations to the President on organizational and structural issues at the College. That is why the issue went from the departments to the Institutional Planning Committee to the College Council. Some faculty members argue that the Senate should make the final **recommendation** to the President. The Bylaws Committee is working on changes that hopefully will make the process clearer as we move to the future.

Professor Naider: In what areas do you feel you have succeeded in your first year as Provost?

Provost: I believe significant progress was made with respect to General Education, to creating schools and to creating new departmental entities. I also feel that the atmosphere on the campus has improved significantly concerning faculty-administration interactions.

Professor Naider: What are some areas that require your continued attention as you transition to your second year as Provost?

Provost: I feel that there are still some in the faculty leadership who do not trust me. That is unfortunate and has the potential to negatively impact what we can accomplish as an Institution. It is my responsibility to show these committed colleagues that I approach all issues with integrity. We may not always agree on issues; however I try to always listen. I hope that this has been demonstrated on a number of occasions this year. Obviously with certain individuals there is more work to be done. I also remain concerned about the status of the participation of CSI faculty in doctoral education at CUNY in both the sciences and the humanities. I will work to ensure that we are “at the table” as discussions go forward.

Professor Naider: What are your main goals for the 2013-2014 academic year?


Provost: I will work to continue to raise the level of teaching and scholarship at the College of Staten Island. We need to be demanding of our students, of ourselves and of our colleagues. This, in my view, is what academia **must** be about. We cannot just do our jobs; we must excel in our disciplines and push our students to reach and even exceed their potential. Next year we will work hard:

- To launch the Schools of Business and Education.
- To increase the scholarly productivity of our faculty; in particular in publishing their work.
- To support faculty initiatives in their scholarship and pedagogy.
- To find solutions for the poor performance of our students in remedial courses.
- To continue to invest to improve our infrastructure.
- To work together with the faculty to make CSI a fun place to be for them and the students.

Professor Naider: Well, with that, do you have any final words for our committee, the faculty and our students?

Provost: I wish you all a productive summer break. Relax, rejuvenate, explore your intellectual and creative interests. Revitalize your passions, and finally in terms of decision making, to quote Lawrence Peter (Yogi) Berra. “When you come to the fork in the road take it!!”. I look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Best regards,



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