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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Naider".

Dear Colleagues:

As I near the end of my second year as Provost of CSI, I thought that it might be valuable for me and the campus to reflect on what has been accomplished, where I stand on some key issues and my vision for the future in terms of following our Strategic Plan. As I have done previously, I will present my thoughts as part of a fictional discussion between a Campus Sage and the Provost. I hope that my words will be taken as an objective overview of where we now stand and the challenges that confront us.

CSI Sage: How would you compare CSI in June 2014 with CSI in June 2012?

Provost: I think that the campus is much calmer and that, for the most part, the faculty is involved primarily with issues that they are initiating and for which they are strong advocates. As a result, we now have approved or accredited new programs in social work (B.S.W and M.S.W.), geography (B.A.), electrical engineering (B.S.E.E.), physical therapy (DPT) nursing (DNP), education (M.S. TESOL), and a graduate certificate in business (Business Analytics of Large-scale Data); many other new degree or certificate programs are at various stages of governance. The enthusiasm and energy of the faculty has been inspiring.

CSI Sage: Aren't you concerned that the General Education curriculum at CSI has been decimated by Pathways?

Provost: Obviously, I am aware that there are those among the faculty who remain concerned by the Pathways General Education curriculum and resentful at the way it was implemented. Nevertheless, from the start, I have been a believer that within the Pathways framework and the 17 credits that remain from our previous General Education requirement is the capability to deliver a superior general education to our students. I am convinced that using 3-credit/3-hour courses we can still achieve the learning outcomes and the writing, quantitative and critical thinking skills that are necessary for a fulfilling life. Even if we were to revert to pre-Pathways rules, many of our sister campuses would still deliver 3-hour Gen Ed courses. My belief is that CSI should be able to meet our educational goals with such courses. My hope is that as we go forward adjustments will be made in the Pathways regulations. I believe that faculty involvement in the determination of these adjustments is essential.

CSI Sage: What do you view as your chief accomplishments during your first two years as Provost?

Provost: I do not view progress as a personal achievement. Anything that I have been able to achieve has been due to the participation and cooperation of the faculty, the academic Deans, the President and his cabinet and all of the campus community. Chief among our achievements has been a significant growth of the FT faculty which will continue in the next academic year, the institution of reassigned time awards to support faculty scholarship, the investment of nearly one million dollars in infrastructure to support scholarship and pedagogy, the creation of the new schools, the restructuring of a number of departments and the clear improvement in the image and visibility of CSI both locally and beyond the Island.

CSI Sage: My sensing devices are triggering. Isn't there widespread concern that we are morphing from a liberal arts and sciences college to a professional training institution?

Provost: CSI is steeped in the liberal arts and sciences tradition. The new schools complement this tradition by addressing community needs. The challenge of the Academy is to respond to changes in science, in knowledge and in technology. When the Academy was first formed by Plato it was restricted to philosophical and sometimes polemic arguments. Scientific (mathematical) arguments were tolerated but mostly in an attempt to understand the movements in the heavens. In contrast, the medieval universities were often the outgrowths of scholastic guilds emphasizing knowledge in the arts, medicine and theology. They were usually strongly tied to and regulated by the Church. In the modern evolution of the Academy the liberal arts and sciences emphasize the skills necessary to function as an informed and involved citizen. The fact is that regardless of whether a person is a philosopher, a mathematician or an accountant, grounding in the liberal arts is essential. Something I believe that, as a whole, the CSI faculty understands.

CSI Sage: How can you make the above statement when so many resources are being redirected toward the schools and professional programs?

Provost: Your contention is not supported by the facts. Since I have assumed the position of Provost at CSI we have hired 41 faculty members. Of these 21 were hired in the humanities and social sciences, and only seven in the new schools. Of these seven, many would have been hired if the schools did not exist as part of allocations to the existing Business and Education Departments. The funds for the new Deans all came from special CUNY allocations related to the new schools.

CSI Sage: So many things have happened at CSI during the past two years – do you believe these changes are occurring too fast?

Provost: The rate of any process may always be questioned. My view is that academia should serve as a buffer for society and change should reflect a slow deliberate evolution. From this perspective, at CSI the formation of schools has been discussed for at least seven years. The faculty in the departments that were affected by the formation of the schools have shown a clear desire for this structural change. Although change should be carefully planned, my belief is that unless we make adjustments we face the possibility that we may become irrelevant to the life and aspirations of our students. No doubt change is difficult in academia as illustrated below.



"We've agreed, then, to deck the halls, but the resolution to be jolly has been tabled."

CSI Sage: Do you have any regrets concerning your performance during your first two years?

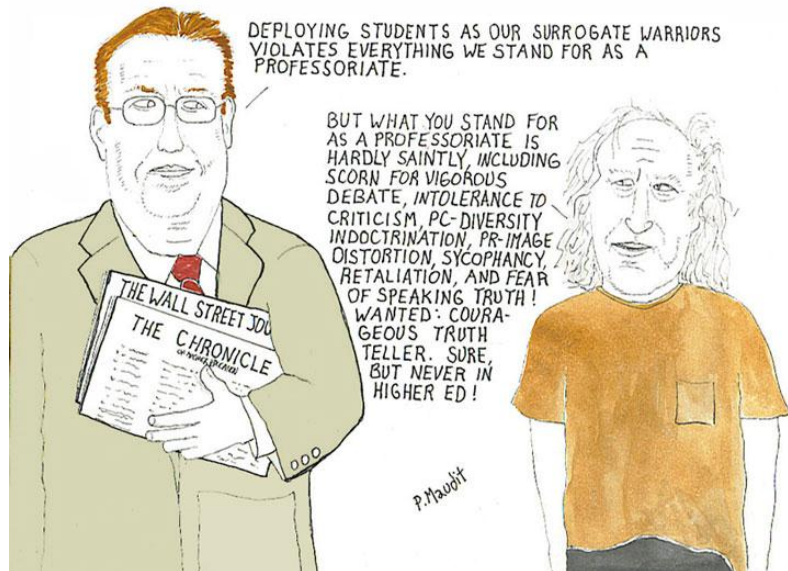
Provost: Anyone in a position of authority must constantly question her/his decisions or interactions with various stakeholders. I continuously review what I have done, how I have done it and the impact of my actions on the mission of the College. During my first two years I have undoubtedly made mistakes. Sometimes I am too reactive when more contemplation would have been appropriate. But, I am learning. Overall, I do not have major regrets.

CSI Sage: There is a view on campus that the faculty voice is not really heard and that the appointment of key ECPs without searches is a violation of shared governance.

Provost: I believe that the faculty view has strongly informed my thinking and that of President Fritz and, on many occasions, has influenced decisions on administrative appointments and College-wide investments. The faculty voice has been a key input in an almost two year process to update our governance. I understand and support the desire of the faculty to have searches for key administrators and am sensitive to the fear that there is not going to be shared governance in the future. Obviously, as seen in the cartoon, even the view of the faculty on various issues is not always convergent. I should probably recuse myself from dealing with this issue because I am directly affected by it. I would like, however, to make a few observations. As long as I occupy the Office of the Provost, it is my intention to

The Deans... Inside Higher Education

Gary A. Olson, Provost and VPAA, Idaho State University, columnist for *Chronicle of Higher Education*



conduct full national searches for all interim Deans and Associate Provosts in Academic Affairs. This is the procedure I followed with the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences. I received input from a very broad sample of the faculty. I can assure you that I heeded this input. As President Fritz announced late yesterday he plans to initiate a search for a permanent Provost sometime in the near future. I am honored that he has chosen to appoint me as Provost and will continue to work to the fullest of my abilities to further the academic mission of the College. Since assuming the position of Interim Provost I have never viewed myself or acted as a caretaker for the position of Provost, and I will go forward with the same spirit and conviction.

CSI Sage: What challenges face CSI as we go forward?

Provost: There is an endless list of small challenges that I will not address. As a campus we remain underfunded; maintaining the physical plant while growing the faculty and staff remains a major, still unfulfilled goal that the administration is tasked with tackling. Clearly, we must continue to raise standards both for the students and the faculty. We are unique in CUNY as the only public college in our borough. This fact determines our mission, provides us with tremendous possibilities, but also is accompanied by great responsibilities. I challenge all of us to work to make CSI a flagship college in CUNY, one that will be attractive to students throughout the borough, the city and certainly New York State. With our expansive campus, our residence halls and our talented faculty we should be able to become a premier institution.

CSI Sage: Excuse me. Do you really believe what I just read? What about remediation, low retention rates, dropouts?

Provost: I am not a head-in-the-clouds Provost. I have been at CUNY for over 40 years and taught all types of students. Unfortunately, some of these students took Biochemistry or Organic Chemistry with me several times before getting a passing grade. But my expectations were always high and I maintained a standard that was consistent with national norms. Undoubtedly, it is a great challenge to educate students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and to give them a quality education. Nevertheless, as indicated in a recent article in the NY Times magazine section, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/magazine/who-gets-to-graduate.html?hp&r=0>), with proper strategies and adequate resources we can increase student success rates. We need to have high expectations, work very hard, give our students hope and make sure they know that we believe they can succeed. We are doing just this as evidenced by the increasing acceptances of CSI students to prestigious graduate schools in medicine, dentistry, business, law, engineering, the social sciences and the liberal arts and sciences. Our graduates are at premier companies such as PricewaterhouseCoopers and are making their presence felt. When visitors such as NY Fed bank President William Dudley and Executive Vice President Thomas Baxter came to CSI, they spoke in glowing terms of the level of our School of Business students. Yes, I am convinced we will one day be viewed as a premier institution of public higher education.

CSI Sage: There must be additional challenges that you have not articulated.

Provost: By any metric available, CSI is not funded to the same extent as the other senior colleges. This underfunding is slowly being addressed. Nevertheless, it impedes our faculty from fulfilling its potential. We need to redouble our efforts to get additional CUNY support while, at the same time, we must convince Staten Island citizens that we are worthy of their investment and philanthropic dollars. In addition our complex educational mission, one that involves students from the remedial to the doctoral level, requires an unusually diverse set of talents from the faculty and staff. We must continually look for ways to efficiently deal with our very heterogeneous student body. Finally, although great strides have been made concerning administration-faculty relations we still are not there as indicated by the attempted actions at the last Faculty Senate meeting. Development of trust requires thoughtful and honest discussions by both the administration and the faculty. I consider the methods used at the Faculty Senate to be contra to the spirit of shared governance and a step in the wrong direction.

CSI Sage: Where do you see CSI in five years? Ten years?

Provost: Let me see, where is my crystal ball? I am an optimist and I think the future is very bright for CSI. We have a great faculty, one that must continue to grow and one that needs continued support from the administration. Our staff is outstanding and totally committed to the students of the College. I am very proud to be the Provost of a faculty that can boast of Jay Rosen from Mathematics who was approved as a CUNY Distinguished Professor, or Patricia Smith from English who, in addition to three major book prizes including the Lenore Marshall and Phyllis Wheatley Book awards for poetry and the Robert L. Fish award for mystery writing, received a Guggenheim Fellowship; or Mark Lewis from History who received the Fraenkel Prize of the Weiner Library in London for the best new outstanding work on 20th century history and the Felix Gross award for a junior faculty member at CUNY, or Sebastien Poget from chemistry who received an NSF career award for his work on ion channels, and the CUNY junior faculty research award; or Soon Chun in the School of Business who received an NSF grant for data privacy and cyber security and is President-elect of the Digital Government Society; or Lana Karasik from psychology who in her first year received an NSF grant for her studies on infant cognition; or Richard Veit and Frank Burbrink from biology who received major grants for environmental studies. This brief listing barely scratches the surface and I apologize to the many whose accomplishments that I have omitted, but I believe the point is made. As our true value as an institution of higher learning becomes more widely known, as our alumni support grows and as we partner with K-12 schools to improve student preparation, I believe we will continue to improve. I am confident that one day we will be a college that will be sought after by both students and faculty. That day will come sooner as we continue to work together on common goals (as below).

I look forward to that achievement. Kadima (Onward)!!

