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William J. Fritz, PhD
President

College Council Remarks
10/22/2021

Budget Updates

As previously reported, we have submitted the FY 22 Financial Plan to the University, covering the current year through FY 24. While we wait for CUNY approval, we must begin working together to implement the necessary changes called for in the financial plan to eliminate our structural deficit and not continue to rely on one-time resources, such as stimulus funds, to end the year balanced. I will keep you updated on our progress.

The Governor recently announced the suspension of the hiring freeze. As a result, CUNY has decided to discontinue the CUNY Vacancy Review Board (VRB). However, there will still be oversight ensuring we live within our financial plan – both in headcount and dollars.

Should campuses exceed their financial hiring ability, the University will place the campus on a hiring pause until the shortfall is addressed.

In order to ensure prudent hiring practices, we will continue utilizing the campus VRB to prioritize hiring for critical positions that are essential for campus operations. This will continue until such time that enrollment continues to steadily increase and our financial picture changes.

Academic Withdrawals

The only administrative withdrawals (WA) that have taken place so far are of those who did not show proof of receiving the MMR vaccine. No students have been assigned WA's due to lack of COVID vaccinations as of yet. We are still waiting to hear from CUNY when we will start assigning WA to unvaccinated students currently registered for in person and/or hybrid courses.



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Academic Affairs and Student Affairs have been working hard on getting the message out and making every effort to encourage students to get vaccinated pursuant to the mandate to avoid withdrawals from courses. Our goal to date has been to get as many students vaccinated as we can. In addition, the more vaccinated students we have will help with our mostly in person courses in the spring.

As of today, 93% of our students in in person courses and 76% of those taken at least one hybrid course are vaccinated.

Spring Semester

As we prepare for registration for the Spring semester, it is important that we ensure that we are prioritizing in-person courses for the success of our students. All students (except those who were granted medical exemptions or religious exceptions) taking in person and hybrid courses will be required to show proof of vaccination within 10 days of the start of classes. This is key to us moving to a more in person Spring.

In addition, full-time faculty are required to teach at least one course in person in the Spring. It is important for our students to have access to their professors both in and out of the classroom, as faculty contact is key to their academic success.

We must ensure that we have a minimum of 70% of our courses in person, with the remaining being offered online or hybrid. Decisions on which courses should be offered online should be based on academic review and approved by Academic Affairs, and only faculty who have completed training for teaching in online modality should be considered for online course assignments. Currently we have met the 70% floor. I want to thank our faculty and deans for their cooperation in meeting the baseline.



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Middle States

Our Middle States draft report is due to the Team Chair on November 1. It is important that the work on the committees for each standard continues. There are some areas where we may fall short, and one area of concern is assessment of student learning.

Assessment is critical in an environment in which we want to ensure student success. It is an area that we must continue to focus on for our students and our institution as a whole. This must be a priority as we face our Middle States review.

Governance

I am still considering feedback regarding the proposed governance plan referendum. To date I have taken no action other than to inform the Chancellor of the results of the vote in a message similar to what I sent to campus on October 4.

I continue to be concerned about our students and the need to provide them a supportive environment. I remain deeply concerned about the College of Staten Island conforming to best practices in Higher Education, including alignment with CUNY, campus climate, collegiality, and compliance with Middle States standards. I continue to call on the entire campus to work together to address our internal processes for discussing issues that affect all of us.

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