April 2019
Report to the Campus Community

I ended my last report to you, excited to book my Amtrak ticket to Washington, D.C., where I would attend the Aspen Institute’s Award Ceremony for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. VP Fox, Provost Russell and I standing shoulder to shoulder with the best community colleges in the country, was one highlight of my month. While we did not receive the top prize, we have much to celebrate. This process started with a review of 1,000 colleges; of that, 150 were invited to apply and ultimately, 10 were selected as finalists. Of those ten finalists, we were the only CUNY institution and the only institution from New York. This achievement is a testament to our work as a college and our focus on student success. However, in the midst of all we celebrate, there remains significant work to be done in closing the equity gaps that continue to pose a significant threat to student success. The illustration below articulates how the efforts that we make towards eliminating equity gaps can not only make a difference for the students that need it most, but ultimately for all students.

theinclusionsolution.me

This work is underway at KCC under the leadership of Provost Russell, and in partnership with all divisions at the College. In recent weeks, college-wide forums/summits have been held on Student Success and Developmental Education. In April, based on the feedback and concerns raised in my meetings with academic departments, a forum was held on advisement. These college-wide forums are one of the many ways we ensure that members of the College community are engaged in this important work. The Provost and her team have been working diligently to follow up on feedback and concerns that have been shared with me since my arrival to KCC. The Office of Academic Affairs is in the midst of developing a new course schedule, which will include an administrative/student club hour. This time in the schedule will make it possible for students to participate in co-curricular activities or avail themselves of important campus resources and services, and for faculty and staff to engage in important college-wide work around key priorities as well as participate in enrichment activities. Another concern that was shared with me upon my arrival in September is the seemingly cumbersome process by which exams are administered. We hope to have developed a proposal for an improved framework by the end of this semester.
Enrollment and all that it entails (attracting students, seamlessly onboarding students, and retaining students) continues to be one of my most critical priorities. As you know, over the past five years, enrollment has been on a steady decline. The charts below provide a quick snapshot of our enrollment patterns.

As the new semester draws near, we need to sharpen our focus on enrollment. To this end, I asked VP Fox to develop a Spring 2019 Enrollment Profile. The executive summary along with the full report can be accessed here: https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/irap/Documents/Framework/spring2019enrollmentprofile.pdf

I recently hosted Laura Bruno, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Strategy and Management to discuss the new application and reporting process; and the President’s Reception for admitted students, hosted over 200 students and their parents and encouraged them to enroll at KCC. This month we also launched the search for a new Vice President of Enrollment Management. Thank you to VP Friebel for his dedication.

As I have indicated before, it is essential that we work together to turn the tide of enrollment. Healthy enrollment (newly admitted students and retention of continuing students) is important because it allows us to serve a greater population. In addition, we need to be conscientious that decreasing enrollment has financial implications. If you attended Convocation or College Council, you had the opportunity to see VP Rios’ budget presentation and understand the relationship between decreased enrollment and the impact on college resources. VP Rios is in active discussion with all Divisions about ways that we can increase efficiency and reduce costs.

We are making strides in our efforts to reinvigorate the College’s brand and marketing efforts which will help attract more students. AVP Todmann and her team are doing an extensive review of our College communications and our communications to students, establishing and reestablishing connections with media outlets, launching a number of multimedia projects and solidifying our College logo and colors. I am excited that, in partnership with the Office of Academic Affairs, the Division of Communications and Marketing will be launching the KCC Faculty Spotlight a web-based initiative that will highlight and celebrate faculty scholarship, research and/or pedagogical activities. I continue to be blown away by the faculty that I meet at KCC, and I remain impressed
by the variety of faculty expertise and research interests that I hear about when I visit departments. I am also acutely aware of the absence of this information from our messaging, particularly our website.

While more information about the KCC Faculty Spotlight will be forthcoming, today we get to celebrate and congratulate Professors Maureen Fadem, Lea Fridman and Cheryl Smith on receiving the William P. Kelly Research Fellowship for the 2019-20 academic year. The award, launched six years ago by Interim Chancellor William P. Kelly, is a part of CUNY’s strategy to support and grow faculty research and scholarly activity at CUNY’s community colleges. I am proud that of the 52 applications that were received by the committee, and 20 that were awarded that 3 were granted to members of the Kingsborough faculty. Congratulations are also in order for KCC faculty who were awarded PSC-CUNY Research Awards: Professors Alison Better, Shawna Brandle, Jessica Corbin, John Descarfino, Emral Devany, Sarah Dillon, Maureen Fadem, Lea Fridman, David Goldberg, Thomas Mintz, Patrice Morgan, Caterina Pierre, Jeremy Sawyer, Jacob Segal, Cheryl Smith, Red Washburn, and Dominic Wetzel.

In April, I stood in solidarity with other members of the College community on Denim Day. Earlier in the day, we put our administrative professionals in the spotlight, as I was excited to host a brunch in honor of our outstanding, dedicated and hardworking colleagues to celebrate their special day.

I was pleased to welcome Wes Moore, CEO of Robin Hood Foundation; Gary Jenkins, 1st Deputy Commissioner, HRA and members of his team to discuss the resources that can help support students as they complete their degrees.

We are fortunate to have donors, like Rhonda Polly (Class of 1980) who are committed to supporting our students. On April 30th, we honored Mrs. Polly along with over 120 donors at our annual Donor Recognition Reception. Donors who established named Scholarships and Awards were also highlighted at this special stewardship event.

Last month, I also hosted Judith Bergtraum, Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Construction and Management and her team. Although I have described in writing the state of our facilities, I thought it was important for the Vice Chancellor to see in person what we see every day; a library in disrepair, leaky roofs and the need for upgrades throughout the campus. VC Bergtraum has shared with me that Kingsborough is her number one priority, and she will be exploring ways in which we can expedite some of these protracted processes and identify funding to meet our capital needs.

As I have indicated, please be mindful that many facility issues are capital projects, and are, therefore, more involved, but other issues can be addressed in a timely fashion. The results from our recent Faculty and Staff Satisfaction survey have been a great source of information, and have propelled us to address some issues immediately.
I want to take this opportunity to thank the 154 faculty members that completed the General Classroom Furniture Survey last month. Your input does make a difference. The information that was garnered from the survey will help us improve how classroom furniture can better support teaching and learning. VP Rios will share results and recommendations that arose from the survey.

The COACHE survey is now closed. While our response rate (43.8%) was a bit higher than in 2017 (40.3%), I had hoped for more participation. As I have indicated, information like this is helpful in providing me with a better understanding of strengths and needs as well as a compass to what areas need attention. As we enter the season of Strategic Planning and Middle States preparation, this information becomes even more critical.

Another highlight of my month started when I, along with 14 colleagues from Columbia University, Baruch, John Jay, Manhattanville College, Hofstra University, CUNY Central Office, Hunter, The New School, Kingsborough, Queens College and the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)- NYC, landed in Israel for Scholars as Bridge Builders, Education for Peace, an 8-day intensive seminar and study tour of Israel and the West Bank. We met with a spectrum of leading Israeli and Palestinian scholars and representatives from organizations; and visited major points of interest including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the Dead Sea and Palestinian neighborhoods.

The seminar was JCRC’s first on Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education in Israel with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian context. The ideal of Education for Peace was a central theme as we learned about different initiatives and projects that deal with peace, conflict, and education from various perspectives.

Unfortunately, on the heels of our celebration of Passover and Easter, the world once again went dark when a series of bombs in Sri Lanka resulted in the death and injury of over 200 innocent men, women and children. I am also once again saddened by the violent act of anti-Semitism that lead to death the Lori Kaye at Chabad of Poway, and once again, has cast a dark shadow over humanity. The senseless loss of life is becoming too commonplace. But it is important that in times like this, we all, as a college, recommit ourselves to our collective mission to strengthen and serve our diverse community and our collective goal to promote civic engagement, global awareness, civility, and respect for diversity. It is fitting that a lighthouse is used as one of our college symbols because we have to continue to be the light for Brooklyn and the students we serve. Dr. King said it best, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”