Dear Campus Community,

I hope that this report reaches you in good health and spirits as we approach the end of the 2018-2019 academic year and commencement, our annual celebration of students who have achieved their goals of earning a college degree or other credential.

I am sure you have all read or heard about Robert Smith, the billionaire who in his commencement speech to Morehouse College, made a pledge to pay off the student loans for the graduating class. When I read about this, I imagined what that must have felt like for those students and their families. And then I thought about how fortunate we are to work at community college that provides students with an affordable and high impact education without the burden of high student loan debt.

At CUNY and at Kingsborough, our programs like ASAP and College Discovery help keep college costs low, while programs like College Now and early college high schools help students earn college credit while still in high school. I was excited to start the month off with a visit to our own Kingsborough Early College Secondary School (KECSS) and meeting with the outstanding leadership team who make this possible for so many students. I was equally excited to congratulate them along with our KCC students at the Phi Theta Kappa induction this month as well as bringing greetings at the Mu Alpha Theta induction ceremony. Between the Deans’ List Ceremony; honor society inductions; meeting with the Class of 2019 Valedictorian Irina Russu; having lunch with members of the Student Government Association, Honors Program, College Discovery, and ASAP Students; meeting with Students Unlimited; selecting the Art Award winners; attending the Fashion Design Program Showcase and the student production of the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee; and celebrating our student veterans at their reception this past month, I am thoroughly convinced that our students are the best, brightest, and most socially conscious of them all. I continue to be in awe of their life experiences, focus and determination to succeed.

Our faculty and staff are pretty incredible too. Not only are they actively engaging in service and are the wind beneath the aforementioned programs, but I was pleased to see them in action at the Faculty Forum presenting their research and creative works in such areas as Food Insecurity (Tanzina Ahmed), Algorithmically Crafting Images (Thomas Mintz) and the New Physics of Teams and Teamwork (Lea Fridman); engaging in my first Book Club meeting during our discussion of Educated by Tara Westover and during our Game of Thrones (GOT) Finale post mortem at Kingsborough Landing.

Colleagues, the GOT series is over, but we are still engaged in the work that we need to do to disassemble the walls that prevent students from progressing and achieving their academic goals. I indicated in my address to the campus in October that I know that change is both inevitable and
difficult. I think you will all agree that there are structures and processes which are no longer viable as is there is a need for improvement. There is no one way in which these things can be accomplished, and there will be differences of opinions. I just ask again that we approach this work with each other mindful of our College Values that were recently approved (May 23, 2019) by the College Council:

- Respect - Civility, acceptance, appreciation, and support of individual differences
- Diversity - The proactive fostering of greater inclusion and ultimately equity at every level of college life
- Integrity - Fair and ethical standards in all policies, procedures, and practices
- Excellence - High quality teaching, student services, administration, and community engagement; and high standards for student achievement
- Accountability - Taking responsibility for our actions and outcomes
- Innovation - Creative thinking and approaches that enhance learning and support continuous improvement

In May, we also launched the 2020-2025 Strategic Planning Process. The process will be led by VP Fox and to ensure broad and college-wide participation, I have expanded the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) to include additional faculty and staff. A separate email with names of SPC members, a description of work ahead and plans for the involvement of the campus and our external constituents will be shared in the coming week.

As an assessment driven leader, I am hyper focused on institutional effectiveness and have been working with Senior Leadership to develop a plan for enhancing our institutional assessment efforts, and ensure compliance with Middle States standards and accreditation requirements. Our MSCHE accreditation visit is 6 years away, but our work in ensuring we meet the standards must get underway. For example, in accordance with Standard 7, which underlines the need for periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration, last month I received 2018-19 reports and preliminary 2019-20 plans from College Council committees. Council committees are not alone; Senior Staff will also submit Annual Reports and Plans for the coming year. Outcomes of this year’s activities will be used to inform improvements or validate successes.

The college’s engagement in assessment is important and necessary for us to not only maintain MSCHE accreditation, but to be the best institution we can be for our students. To ensure we have a vibrant culture of assessment, we will be conducting a search for a Director of Assessment who will be responsible for leading academic assessment efforts and work with faculty and staff in supporting overall assessment efforts at the college. While a Director of Assessment will be an integral part of the leadership structure of assessment, in order to build a true culture of assessment, all members of the college community must be involved. As such, we plan to provide resources (reassigned time) to academic departments to help support faculty participation in academic assessment efforts.
I continue to be grateful for the support of our elected officials. In May, I met with our State Senator Andrew Gounardes at his temporary office in Bay Ridge, and had the opportunity to speak with Congressman Hakeem Jeffries who served as our guest of honor for our 2nd Student Lunch with Leaders program. Colleagues, we are also fortunate that we have donors and extended members of the KCC family who believe in and support our students. In addition to attending the Retiree Luncheon, and celebrating Fran Koch, one of the founders of the KCC My Turn Program at their annual end of the year reception, I had the honor of having lunch with one of our alums who pledged another $50,000 in funds to support our students over the next 5 years. KCC holds a very special place in the minds of others and there are so many that are working to ensure we have the resources to help students meet their goals. Our upcoming Seaside Splash: Garden of Dreams on June 20th is one way in which we can each do a little bit more to help students to meet their goals. Please extend an invitation to your circle of friends and encourage them to do the same.

As classes start to wind down, please know that the Enrollment Management team is revving up. We see slight improvements when looking at data from last year, and know that there is more that needs to be done. We have developed a short-term plan to address this issue and identify areas in immediate need of improvement. I am pleased to report we are making good progress on our search for a new VP for Enrollment Management. I hope to make an announcement in or before my June 2019 Report to the Campus Community.

In my April Report to the Campus Community I reported on the outcome of our bid for the Aspen Prize. Looking ahead to 2021, we will once again be eligible to pursue the top spot for the Aspen Prize. In my individual conference call for finalists with Aspen, we were praised for our commitment to reducing equity gaps and for our outstanding and holistic support of students. Advisement and workforce development were cited by Aspen as two areas in need of attention. Fortunately for us, these areas were already on our radar and significant work has been underway to redesign our advisement structure by creating discipline-based academies with clear guided pathways.

With regards to workforce, I have spent the past few months assessing college needs so I can better identify market needs as well as the kind of leadership and structure we need not so that we can achieve Aspen’s highest recognition, but so our students develop the skills and expertise that they need to enter or advance in the workforce. We hope to have a VP for Workforce Development in place by the fall. In the interim, I have observed too many instances of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing… or more directly stated of two, sometimes three different departments who have partnerships or who are developing relationships with the same organization unbeknownst to the other. To this end, we are working on developing a partnership directory, which will serve to document the nature of all partnerships/relationships with external partners. This will both help us to coordinate our efforts, but also improve our ability to effectively engage with external partners in a number of ways.

Finally, I have to tell you there hasn’t been one meeting with students where they have not sung the high praises of the amazing and dedicated faculty and staff at the college. KCC students appreciate
all that you do and have done for them. I look forward to seeing you at the Nursing Pinning (6/11) Awards Ceremony (6/12), and Commencement (6/13) as we in turn applaud our amazing students for their accomplishments.