Dear Campus Community,

The second month of my administration has been met with both highs and lows. At the start of the month, I was still trying to come to terms with the unimaginable attempted and actualized acts of violence rooted in hate reverberated throughout the country, the world and our college. An African American couple was targeted and shot to death in Jeffersontown, Kentucky; explosive devices were sent to a number of elected and non-elected leaders across the country; and a gunman entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh and savagely ended the lives of 11 people who simply came to worship. In subsequent letters to the campus community and memorial events, I called upon us to mourn, but honor the lives that were lost. I used this opportunity to remind us of our collective purpose in ensuring that Kingsborough remains a place where we are respectful of the spectrum of diversity that characterizes our college community.

Hate, I reminded everyone has no place here. We should bring into these gates the best, not the worst, of ourselves to others. Both recently and in the not too distant past, there have been instances where faculty, staff and students have been made to feel uncomfortable and disrespected. I addressed this in my November 1st letter to the campus and unfortunately, I am addressing it again today, because it continues to happen. What I didn’t say in the letter, but will say today, is that if there are those that continue to act in these ways, we will not have to wait for a hurricane even more powerful than Sandy to destroy our college; we will not have to worry about the low enrollment affecting the viability of the college, because the actions of a few will easily destroy the Kingsborough we love.

I am asking each of you, as stewards of the Kingsborough mission to do your part in ensuring that Kingsborough is the brightest jewel in CUNY’s crown. Please start by coming out and encouraging your colleagues to come out to celebrate our students. We recently had a Dean’s List Awards ceremony. When I asked for faculty to stand and be acknowledged, there were some chairpersons in attendance seated behind me that stood, I counted one maybe two faculty members in the audience. I was also surprised that there were not many staff members in attendance. Celebrating and showing up for our students is equally important as teaching, advising, and working to support their success. In this spirit, I had the pleasure of attending the student production of “As You Like It”. But I didn’t like it at all…. I loved it! Our students are amazing, and the faculty and staff that support them to do what I consider Broadway worthy work, are equally amazing.

Colleagues, I’ve been on a high meeting with faculty and staff. I’ve had five Meet & Greet Breakfasts and have met with four academic departments. I have been using these opportunities to identify areas of strength and concern. Next week, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will launch a campus wide Faculty and Staff Satisfaction Survey. These data will provide me additional and comprehensive information about areas of both high and low satisfaction. The survey will be administered annually in December. I also plan to start meeting with student clubs beginning in the spring.

In my various venues with faculty and staff, it warms me to see and hear all the good things that are happening at Kingsborough. Such as the following:

- KCC was the only community college to participate in the Fed Challenge, but our Bull and Bear Club advanced from the quarter finals to the semi-finals and from there to placing 2nd. We have the leadership of both Eric and Cesar from the Department of Business to thank for this.
• We had four students complete in the Big Apple Chapter Competition of the American Culinary Federation; and they brought home honorable mentions, as well as bronze and silver medals for their culinary creations in hot food, and my favorite, desserts. Many thanks to David, Anthony and Naxielly in the Culinary Arts Program.

• NYC Office of Financial Empowerment designated KCC as the first official site for EmpoweredNYC. This is a national initiative as well as that of the Mayor, to strengthen the financial health of people with disabilities. It will be housed in our Single Stop Office and we will have a financial counselor provided by the city to meet with students. We have KCC staff Hattie, Stella and Nick to thank for this.

• The KCC CXM Academy was awarded the Continuing Education Association of New York (CEANY) 2018 Dr. James C. Hall Exemplary Program Award. We were lauded by CEANY for our innovative approaches to ensure that students are job ready and for our good use of partnerships within the community. Special thanks to Hillary for her leadership.

I endeavor to continue to ensure that members of our community are recognized and celebrated for their contributions to the college. To this end, I held the first annual Veterans Day Luncheon to honor our students, faculty and staff who have served; celebrated our DC 37 and trade workers with a special Season of Thanks Breakfast; celebrated the first cohort of KCC Employees of the Month at a special lunch prepared by students in the Ocean View room; and my senior team and I were humbled to serve students at the Thanksgiving Dinner sponsored by the Student Government Association.

I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that change is inevitable. When we actively engage in institutional assessment (looking at what we do, how we do it, why we do it, who is doing and let’s face it, how much it costs to do it) change will happen. When there is new leadership, there is likely change in the wind. Some of these changes have been in the hopper prior to my arrival. Like enhancing the scheduling grid, addressing the exam schedule framework, relaunching the student evaluations of teaching, and improving advisement. These are probably changes that you are excited about. But I know there are some changes that will not be popular. Change as I have said is difficult, but like I’ve said, I am not and my senior leadership team are not purposely trying to make any one’s life difficult. If we have to reassign space, this should not be taken as a personal affront. If we have to redirect resources to support critical initiatives, this should not be taken personally. No decision that is made is done so without thorough consideration of all the factors involved. And when decisions are made, I endeavor to ensure that we provide context and reasons for these decisions.

So many of you have expressed the lack of communication or information as an issue. In the spirit of communication, I want to share with you that the University has rolled out a new applications system. In the old system, students could apply to up to six CUNY colleges and they would rank them by choice. After admission, the University would then invite the student to test at their first-choice college. Many times, students did not actually realize they were listing colleges by choice and this created some confusion at the time of admission. With the new system, we now receive the files of prospective students who listed KCC on their CUNY application and we are in full control of our applicant pool. While this is a good thing for us, it also creates increased competition amongst the CUNY colleges for many of the same students. Now more than ever we have to ensure that we not only attract, but ensure that our processes with regards to onboarding students are high quality and effective.

With regards to our current enrollment, we have 11,013 students excluding CN; this represents a 3.2% decrease in enrollment from last year at this time. We increased the number of first-time freshmen by 5.4% to 2085 students but experienced decreases in returning and readmit students. We have our work cut out for us, but I have no doubt that we will be successful in turning the tide.
I am pleased to share with you a new addition to the Kingsborough family and my team. Ms. Karen St. Hilaire will join the President’s Office as Special Projects Manager (Substitute Higher Education Associate) helping us to develop and implement a variety of projects and initiatives. Karen comes to us after serving as an Executive Assistant Specialist at Raymond James & Associates. She has extensive experience in project management and a strong commitment to community service and civic engagement. Ms. St. Hilaire holds a Master of Science in Urban Affairs from Hunter College, a Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies from John Jay College and has completed a post graduate course at the Harvard Extension School. I have known Karen for many years, I know her to have a vibrant energy that inspires those around her. I know she will be an asset to the college. In the role of Special Projects Manager, Karen will be working with and across all our divisions. Please welcome her with the same warmth and excitement that you welcomed me.

Finally, I am excited to report that November ended on a high note, as we showed our #KCCSpirit on Giving Tuesday by raising over $30,000 and donating a bounty of food items to the Food Pantry. A big THANK YOU to all those who donated, participated and celebrated the joy of giving on Giving Tuesday.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Holiday Celebration on Tuesday, December 11th at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia V. Schrader