

PRESIDENT'S MARCH 2020 REPORT TO BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

I write to express my deepest hope that all in our BCC community remain healthy and safe during this health crisis. I also want to update you on some good news regarding the College's successful efforts to transition to distance education mode and for the majority of our staff to telecommute. Effective, Monday, March 23rd, Bronx Community College successfully shifted 96% of our courses to distance modalities. I thank our Provost and Vice President Lester Sandres Rápalo and his team for leading this successful effort, working with the department chairpersons and the faculty. The Provost and the Office of Academic Affairs will continue to work on solutions for students in those classes which cannot convert to a distance format.

As reported earlier, we quickly and effectively moved to distance modalities. This rapid transition could not have occurred without Loic Audusseau, Mark Lennerton, Albert Robinson, Jose Lai, and the entire IT and Center for Teaching and Learning Technology staffs. They have been working tirelessly to support our faculty, staff and students as everyone gets up to speed on technological formats that may be unfamiliar to them. This shift has been a campus wide effort and it could not have happened without contributions from the entire BCC community. Thank you to the faculty and staff who utilized existing skills to support those developing new skills. Again, I say "thank you" to all others who have come to campus and those who have worked remotely to keep the campus running and functioning during this radical time of disruption, fatigue and anxiety.

Our goal throughout this transition has focused on reducing large groups on campus, as that is the best advice from health officials on how to maintain the well-being and safety of our entire community. Currently and going forward, only essential staff and a few of my direct staff will be present on campus. Special thanks to our Physical Plant Services team and the Power Plant staff for their tireless dedication to our physical facilities. I thank our Interim Director of Public Safety, Saul Fraguada, and all of our Public Safety Officers for maintaining the safety of our campus throughout this time, as they always do. As many of you know, we had a smooth payroll distribution last week. Thank you to Gina Ugarte and Clement Hemmings and the Business Office team for coming to campus, getting paychecks out, and maintaining the continuity of our financial side of the business. Additional thanks to Frank Giglio and the Campus Service Center team for providing constant in-person service to the campus as we systematically continued to reduce our workforce physically on the campus.

Making the transition to "online" or distance learning has not been seamless for all. Some within our community (especially our students) have been faced with challenges, particularly as it relates to having the necessary electronics and internet access. Motivated by these concerns, CUNY Chancellor Matos Rodriguez has instituted a "Recalibration Period" beginning this Friday, March 27th, through Wednesday April 1st. Distance learning will resume on Thursday, April 2nd. During this time, no online classes will be held and efforts will be made to loan to students and faculty devices to complete their work.

I am very happy to report that CUNY has arranged for the purchase of 50,000 laptops to be distributed among the individual campuses. In the first round of allocations, Bronx Community College will receive 871 devices sometime this week. The BCC Foundation has also successfully ordered an additional 800 laptops. Arrangements for the distribution of these devices to students, faculty and staff is ongoing and will be finalized shortly. As soon as a plan is in place, I will provide details.

Additionally, we have worked with all of the major internet and smart phone service providers in our area, and are happy to report that they have instituted the following changes for the next 60 days: all limits on data, talk and text use on smart phones have been lifted; all public hotspots will be free and accessible; students may use their smart phone as a hot spot at no extra charge; there will be no late fees or disconnections for home and mobile devices; and Spectrum has announced that low income individuals

or families can have free installation and broadband access. A broadcast with details on this effort will be sent out to the college.

The Recalibration Period will also afford faculty time to consider ways to better support learning through, for example, the asynchronous delivery of classes and other best practices emerging across our University's virtual classrooms. BCC and CUNY are making this move before we progress further into the semester, to ensure that we are upholding the University's mission and giving each and every CUNY student an opportunity to thrive.

Now that we have had some time to identify aspects of distance learning that could be improved, faculty will be able to use the Recalibration Period to fine-tune their practices, which should serve to improve educational outcomes. We're asking faculty to grant extra flexibility to students who might have had limited access to laptops and tablets since the rollout of distance learning on March 19th.

The University's previously scheduled Spring Recess will now run from Wednesday, April 8th through Friday, April 10th, encompassing the beginning of Passover and Good Friday. For faculty, staff and students whose religious observation extends into the week of April 13th, as always you have the right to request a religious exemption to observe the holiday. CUNY's guidance for religious exemptions can be found [here](#).

Finally, these extraordinary circumstances have prompted CUNY to enact a flexible credit/no credit policy, under which students will have 20 days after they receive their grades to decide if they want to convert any or all of the letter grades they earn in their classes to Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) grading. The University will supply students with pertinent information about the impact of CR/NC on their financial aid and academic progress. Pending approval by the CUNY Board of Trustees, the policy will go into effect April 1st.

We are charting new territory in rapidly developing and changing times. Please continue to check the BCC website and your BCC email account for updates. The health and safety of our entire community are my first and foremost concern. They are followed by the need to continue providing high-quality service to our students and each of you. Again, I want to thank all members of our campus community for rising to this incredible set of challenges. We could not be successful without the contributions of each and every person. Should you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me (thomas.i@bcc.cuny.edu) or my Deputy Karla Renee Williams (karla.williams@bcc.cuny.edu).

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President