

## **PRESIDENT'S APRIL 2020 REPORT TO BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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Recently, someone sent me a note with a picture attached. The picture had a sign that read, “You are not working from home during a crisis. You are in a crisis, and doing your best to work from home.” It’s a subtle distinction, but a powerful and important one. While we are tasked with continuing the day to day business of Bronx Community College, we are first and foremost humans coping with incredibly difficult and stressful circumstances. I am consistently impressed and proud of the resiliency and determination each member of our community has displayed in the unyielding pursuit of excellence in education for our students and colleagues. Thank you. Thank you for showing up (whether online or in person) when you are exhausted and strained and sad and frightened. Thank you for smiling on the WebEx and Zoom calls and maintaining your sense of humor. Thank you for being patient with me and with one another. This is not easy for anyone. But you do it and you do it well. I look forward to the day when we can look back on this time and know that it is all behind us. In the meantime, we persist. I wish you all the very best in staying healthy and safe. For those who are ill, or who are assisting others who are ill, I wish you a speedy and complete recovery.

There are a number of important updates that I would like to share. BCC has continued to disseminate laptops to students, faculty and staff who need them. In addition to the 1000 computers we funded through the Research Foundation and additional laptops provided by CUNY, we received \$125K each from Assemblyman Victor Pichardo and Assemblywoman Natalia Fernandez to support to the purchase of electronic devices. For those who were unable to come to campus, or who did not feel safe traveling, we had devices delivered to their homes by either BCC or CUNY. We have received feedback from students and faculty that some of the platforms uploaded onto devices are inconsistent with software needed for specific majors or class instruction. Chief Information Officer Loic Audusseau is working diligently with Provost and Vice President Lester Sandres Rápalo to identify tech solutions before the Fall semester commences.

On April 20, 2020, Chancellor Matos Rodriguez and University Provost Jose Luis Cruz issued two documents: “Call to Action: CUNY’s Academic Pivot to Summer 2020” and the “FY2021 State Enacted Analysis” financial report. Both of these documents have been disseminated to Vice Presidents, Deans, and Department Chairpersons and are being placed on the BCC website. They describe the current plans for the remainder of this fiscal year (ending June 30, 2020) and initial plans for fiscal year 2021. Both are excellent sources of information and I urge you to read them. As we receive guidance from CUNY on financial matters, I will share it with the community.

CUNY will be online in distance education mode for the Summer 2020 classes. We are still awaiting guidance and decisions on the modality for the Fall 2020 semester. While many students, faculty and staff may want to return back to live classes and regular business, we have to be thoughtful about the health and safety of all of those in our community. Please be assured that your health is the most important factor in these determinations.

The United States Department of Education will be offering COVID-19 relief to students at academic institutions under the CARES Act. Under this Act, each CUNY institution will receive a designated amount, based on their number of PELL recipients. 50% of the money issued under this CARE Act is earmarked specifically for students. The other 50% will be disbursed to the institution. At this time, we are not aware of the amount slated for allocation to each student or when the funding will be issued. As soon as we receive additional information, we will share it with the campus community.

In an ongoing effort to maintain transparency and timely share information, two virtual town halls were scheduled – one for students on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, and another for faculty and staff on Thursday, April 30, 2020. Thank you to all who have participated.

CUNY has established a Vacancy Review Board following the institution of a hiring and spending freeze. This is explained in the April 27, 2020, memo from Chancellor Matos Rodriguez entitled “University Vacancy Review Board for Personnel Actions.” It discusses the scope of positions considered, the Board’s meeting schedule and process, CUNY’s approach to part-time positions, pending hires and actions, and college responsibilities. The Vacancy Review Board will be reviewing every request for exception to the personnel and hiring freeze.

During this time, we are continuing to find ways to receive feedback from members of our college community. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment has recently mounted three needs assessments (one for all full time faculty and staff). For those who may not have a chance to be heard in other forums, you can respond to the needs assessment to share your point of view. These surveys will help inform how some of the BCC-specific training will be developed.

I want to remind everyone that CUNY enacted 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 has supplied students with pertinent information about the impact of CR/NC on their financial aid and academic progress. Following Board of Trustee approval, this policy went into effect April 1, 2020.

Our circumstances are changing and rapidly developing. Please continue to check the BCC website and your BCC email account for updates. We are using these avenues, along with our social media, to share as much information about CUNY and BCC as possible. You will also begin to see BCC advertising for summer sessions and the Fall semester in new aggressive paid social media campaigns and throughout local daily press. We have adjusted our original plans for outreach to better reach our current and potential students during this pandemic and hope to see a meaningful impact on our enrollment moving forward.

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](mailto:thomas.i@bcc.cuny.edu)) or my Deputy Karla Renee Williams ([karla.williams@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:karla.williams@bcc.cuny.edu)).

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